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THE GREATEST SIN BEFORE GOD
THE GOSPEL OF PETER AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
CHRISTIAN ANTI-JUDAISM

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The main research question of this study is to examine the formation of Christian anti-Judaism, and in particular the claim that the Jews murdered Christ in the light of the evidence preserved in the Gospel of Peter. The text of the Gospel of Peter is analysed through source and redaction criticism. It is concluded that a literary dependence of the Gospel of Peter on the canonical gospels is the most plausible explanation for the existing evidence. The cumulative evidence of unique features of the canonical gospels, verbal agreements, inconsistencies in the narrative and the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter explain the similarities and the differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. The redaction critical analysis shows that the author of the Gospel of Peter solves problems within and between the canonical gospels in such an insightful manner that it requires a profound knowledge of their content. The redaction critical examination of the evidence also demonstrates a consistent apologetic and polemical redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. This redaction critical analysis provides evidence for a hypothesis that the Gospel of Peter was written in a social context where Christians were engaged in verbal disputes with Jewish critics of Christianity.

The hypothesis that the Gospel of Peter was written in a social context that included verbal disputes between Christians and Jews is examined by comparing the apologetic redaction of the author to the criticism of early Christianity. This comparison demonstrates that the apologetic redaction of the Gospel of Peter responds to criticism that is preserved in the sources of the first two centuries. These sources attribute this criticism consistently to Jewish critics of Christianity.

A distinction between the historical situation and the rhetorical situation provides a solution to the debates of previous scholarship on the social context and purpose of the Gospel of Peter. The author of the Gospel of Peter responds to Jewish criticism of the Christian community, but his response is directed to the members of the Christian community. This solution explains the connection between the apologetic redaction of the author of the

Gospel of Peter and Jewish criticism, and the polemical description of the Jewish people and leaders in the Gospel of Peter.

The social identity approach is applied to analyse the identity construction of Christians in the face of the above-mentioned challenges. The social identity approach explains the intergroup interaction and particularly the intergroup discrimination between Christians and Jews. This approach explains why Christians constructed a self-conception of their own group as loyal followers of Jesus in relation to the Jewish group, who are represented as demonic murderers of Jesus. This polarized Christian identity is seen as a norm that governed the community's orientation in a complex social reality where divisions between the respective groups were not clearly defined.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Task

A fundamental aspect of Christian anti-Judaism has always been the accusation that the Jews murdered Christ. Throughout the centuries Christians used this accusation to justify the persecution of Jews. Despite the significance of this myth for the history of Christianity and Judaism the scholarship of early Christianity has not produced a profound explanation why Christians formulated this tradition that has had very tragic consequences. The main purpose of this study is to examine why Christians formulated the accusation that the Jews murdered Christ. However, I do not attempt to examine all of the preserved evidence and provide a comprehensive explanation to the problem, because this would require a lifetime's work. The goal of this study is more modest. I will examine the evidence that has been preserved in the fragment of the Gospel of Peter and analyse how this evidence provides information concerning the formation of the most important anti-Jewish tradition of Christianity. The Gospel of Peter (Gos. Pet.) is one of the earliest documents that bears witness to the existence of this accusation in a full narrative form. In the preserved fragment of the Gospel of Peter the Jewish king Herod condemns Jesus to death (Gos. Pet. 1:2) and hands him over to the Jewish people (Gos. Pet. 2:5). They mock and abuse the Son of God before crucifying him (Gos. Pet. 3:6–4:10). They offer him a poisonous drink when he hangs on the cross and fill up the measure of their sins (Gos. Pet. 15:16–15:17). After Jesus's death, the Jewish people rejoice (Gos. Pet. 6:23). These elements of the fundamental anti-Jewish myth establish the Gospel of Peter as one of our main windows to the formative period of Christian anti-Judaism. *The main research question of this study is to examine the formation of Christian anti-Judaism, and in particular the claim that the Jews murdered Christ, in the light of the evidence preserved in the Gospel of Peter.*

Unfortunately, the study of the formation of Christian anti-Judaism in the light of the evidence preserved in the Gospel of Peter is riddled

with many complicated questions. The most prominent of them has been the much-debated question of the dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. The notable similarities and differences between them inevitably raise the question of their relationship. Practically all possible solutions have been proposed to the problem. Prominent scholars have argued that significant sections of the Gospel of Peter are independent of the canonical gospels, and that the Gospel of Peter preserves the earliest passion traditions, which predate the canonical gospels. It has also been claimed that the Gospel of Peter preserves the primary source of the canonical passion narratives. Scholars who interpret that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on some or all of the canonical gospels disagree whether that dependence should be explained in terms of literary dependence on the written copies of the gospels or on secondary orality. In addition to the literary critical studies of the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels, form and redaction critical analyses of the Gospel of Peter have been primarily carried out with the intention of solving the debated question of the relationship between the gospels. However, these form and redaction critical analyses have also produced diverse interpretations of the evidence.

The studies of the social context behind the Gospel of Peter reflect the diverse interpretations concerning the composition history of this apocryphal gospel. Scholars who have argued for the Gospel of Peter's independence from the canonical gospels reconstruct the social context of the Gospel of Peter very differently than scholars who prefer a secondary oral dependence or literary dependence on all or at least some of the canonical gospels. The opposite poles are represented on the one hand by claims that the Gospel of Peter was written without any particular connection to Jews and on the other hand by claims that it is a reaction to Jewish persecution of Christians. In between fall many proposals of the apocryphon's social context and only few have been supported by a comprehensive study of the evidence.

The composition history and the social context of the Gospel of Peter are intriguing scholarly questions in their own right, but they are also crucial for the study of Christian anti-Judaism through the apocryphal gospel. If significant sections of the Gospel of Peter are regarded as earlier than the

canonical gospels, this would result in a profound re-evaluation of the development of Christian anti-Jewish traditions. This interpretation would not only challenge the dating, but also the social context and the motives for the formation of anti-Jewish passion traditions. Conversely, if the Gospel of Peter is regarded as dependent on the canonical gospels, it would enable us to ask not only how, but also why the elaborate anti-Jewish passion tradition grew out of the seeds planted by the first Christian generations.

The different theories of the formation and social context of the Gospel of Peter are reflected in the various interpretations on the author's stance towards Jews and Judaism. The intriguing question of the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter has also been approached without an extensive examination of the historical critical questions. Many scholars have claimed that the Gospel of Peter represents an outright denigration of the Jews and a hostile attitude towards the Jewish people. Others argue that its anti-Judaism simply echoes the anti-Jewish sentiments of the time of its composition. Some claim the Gospel of Peter presents a more positive attitude towards the Jewish people than the canonical gospels and it was written to convert Jews by offering them an opportunity to repent their sins against the Lord. It is apparent that these different interpretations are founded on conflicting theories of the literary history and social context of the Gospel of Peter. Scholars who argue that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on the canonical gospels, refer to the anti-Jewish elements in apocryphal gospels as evidence of its composition at a later date, while critics of this position argue that the possibility for repentance indicates an earlier period when the relationship between Christians and Jews had not yet deteriorated.

As a consequence of the above-mentioned problems in the studies that focus on the Gospel of Peter, the studies that examine the Christian-Jewish relations in the first two centuries have paid remarkably little attention to this apocryphon. Claudia Setzer devotes less than ten pages to the Gospel of Peter in her study *Jewish Responses to Early Christians* and is very hesitant to make any definite conclusions. Setzer points out that the canonical material is reworked in a manner that tarnishes the image of the Jews. Their responsibility for the death of Jesus indicates a conflict between Christians

and Jews, but the question of its nature – a war of words or actual violence – is left open. The only firm conclusion is that the elaborate apologetic contained in the guard at the tomb narrative (Gos. Pet. 8:28–11:49) demonstrates that the resurrection of Jesus was a point of conflict between Jews and Christians.¹ In his comprehensive book on the Jewish and Christian relationship between 70–170 C.E., Stephen Wilson grants only two pages to the study of the Gospel of Peter. He regards it as manifestly anti-Jewish, but states “we can only guess at what might have motivated the author”.² In her monograph *Image and Reality*, Judith Lieu’s treatment of the Gospel of Peter is also marked by its brevity. Lieu mentions that the Gospel of Peter indicates increased hostility towards the Jews and an apologetic thrust, but the social world behind the Gospel of Peter remains shadowy. The meagre conclusion is that “there is little suggestion that contemporary polemics are the real inspiration”.³ All these studies share the common feature that they are more descriptive than argumentative concerning the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter.

These prominent examples are characteristic of the Gospel of Peter’s treatment in the discussion of the early relationship between Christians and Jews and the development of Christian anti-Judaism. The unresolved questions in the study of the Gospel of Peter seriously limit its use as source material on the formation of Christian anti-Jewish traditions. The contradiction between the importance of the anti-Jewish passion traditions in the Gospel of Peter and its limited use in the studies devoted to the early relationship between Christians and Jews is not justified. The present study offers a detailed analysis of the Gospel of Peter’s anti-Jewish traditions and ultimately provides new insights into the formation of Christian anti-Judaism. Its objective is to meet the above-mentioned challenges and to incorporate the Gospel of Peter more profoundly into the discussion of the relationship between early Christianity and Judaism. The sources of the Gospel of Peter, the author’s treatment of the sources and the social context of the composition of the Gospel of Peter are examined in order to explain its anti-Jewish

¹ Setzer 1994, 116–125.

² Wilson 1995, 87–89.

³ Lieu 1994, 17, 259–261.

material. In addition to the historical critical analysis of the Gospel of Peter, the anti-Jewish evidence is examined in the light of the social identity approach and rhetorical criticism. A particular focus in the social identity approach is in explaining intergroup interaction. It provides a new analytical framework to the examination why the author of the Gospel of Peter fostered and advanced the negative stereotype of Jews as the murderers of the Lord. A rhetorical critical analysis of the Gospel of Peter examines how its author attempts to convince his audience of the negative image of the Jews. The different methodological approaches that are applied in this study of the Gospel of Peter are closely connected to each other and serve the purpose of explaining the formation of early Christian anti-Judaism.

1.2. Previous studies

The Gospel of Peter has a research history that extends over a century and the apocryphon has been examined from various perspectives. The focus in this chapter will be on those studies that are directly relevant to the questions of the literary history, social situation and anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter. I will focus on recent discussions over the past few decades.⁴

The new quest: Revived interest in the Gospel of Peter

Jürgen Denker argues that the Gospel of Peter is independent of the canonical gospels. The thesis of Denker's monograph is that the passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter is not dependent on the four canonical gospels. The author did not know or take into consideration the canonical gospels, because the Gospel of Peter does not preserve their redaction. The Gospel of Peter is based on freely circulating oral traditions and especially on the use of prophetic texts.⁵ In his study, Denker analyses the indirect allusion to the passion prophecies in the Gospel of Peter that form the backbone of the passion narrative.⁶ Denker

⁴ For a more extensive summary of the early scholarship of the Gospel of Peter see Foster 2010, 7–31 and Henderson 2011, 17–27 who discuss a wider range of issues.

⁵ Denker 1975, 31–57.

⁶ Denker 1975, 58–77.

proposes that the apocryphal gospel was written for a Jewish-Christian community, which held a docetic Christology. The anti-Jewish elements of the narrative were designed to show to the unbelieving fellow Jews their sinfulness and need for repentance. Denker dates the Gospel of Peter to the first third of the second century.⁷

Helmut Koester brought the question of the early and independent traditions in the Gospel of Peter to the attention of wider scholarship. Koester's article on the apocryphal gospels challenged scholars to look for early and possibly pre-canonical traditions in the non-canonical gospels. As a part of this wider thesis, Koester argues that the Gospel of Peter is independent of the canonical gospels. The allusions to the prophetic texts of the Old Testament in the passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter reflect a more primitive form of the tradition than the canonical gospels. Koester's thesis is that the details of passion narrative developed out of the prophetic texts and not from historical reminiscences of the death of Jesus.⁸ Later Koester presented his thesis of the Gospel of Peter in *Ancient Christian Gospels* in a slightly modified and lengthier manner. Koester argues that the resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter contains an early form of an epiphany narrative, which has been divided into small fragments and become part of the ministry of Jesus in the canonical gospels. Koester admits that the passion and resurrection narratives of the Gospel of Peter include later expansions, such as the role of Herod, but the earliest layers of the Gospel of Peter are more primitive than the canonical gospels.⁹

John Dominic Crossan argued first in *Four Other Gospels* and later in an extensive monograph *The Cross That Spoke* that the Gospel of Peter contains a passion (Gos. Pet. 1:1–2, 2:5b–6:22, 7:25) and a resurrection narrative (Gos. Pet. 8:28–10:42, 11:45–11:49) that are independent of the canonical gospels. Moreover, Crossan claims that the authors of the canonical gospels used this reconstructed narrative, which he calls the *Cross Gospel*, as their source. The extant form of the Gospel of Peter was composed in the second century when secondary elements were added to the original passion

⁷ Denker 1975, 57.

⁸ Koester 1980, 105–130, especially 126–130.

⁹ Koester 1990, 216–240.

and resurrection narrative. A redactor inserted three scenes from the canonical gospels into the narrative texture of the *Cross Gospel*. This stratum, which Crossan labelled as the intracanonical level, contains the pericopes of the burial of the Lord (Gos. Pet. 6:23–6:24), the discovery of the empty tomb (Gos. Pet. 12:50–13:57) and the apparition to the disciples (Gos. Pet. 14:60). These intracanonical sections are, according to Crossan, controlled by internal apologetics. They attempt to safeguard the disciples' honour from the shame of abandoning their Lord, and protect the women from the accusation that they did not show proper piety to the deceased Lord. In other words, the author emphasizes that the followers of Jesus "did the very best they could in difficult circumstances".¹⁰ The second-century redactor of the Gospel of Peter integrated the original *Cross Gospel* and the traditions of the intracanonical gospels with redactional scene preparations. They were required to harmonize the contradictions between pre-canonical and canonical traditions. These later insertions can be detected from the interruptions and contradictions in the narrative. The *Cross Gospel* presumed that Jesus was buried by his enemies (Gos. Pet. 2:3–2:5b), but the intracanonical tradition recounts a burial by friends (Gos. Pet. 6:23–6:24). The description of the disciples' activities during the passion and resurrection (Gos. Pet. 7:26–7:27, 14:58–14:59) prepares for the apparition (Gos. Pet. 14:60). The *Cross Gospel* described the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus with two angels (Gos. Pet. 10:39–11:42), but in the canonical gospels the women discover an angel in the empty tomb (Gos. Pet. 12:50–13:57). The descent of another angel harmonizes these traditions (Gos. Pet. 11:43–11:44) and explains how the angel is found inside the tomb when the two angels had ascended to heaven with the Lord.¹¹ Crossan argues that his mediating position of independence and dependence on the canonical gospels solves the impasse in the scholarship of the relationship between the canonical gospels and the Gospel of Peter.¹²

Crossan argues that the Gospel of Peter bears witness to the earliest use of Old Testament prophecies in the formation of the passion narrative. This connection between Old Testament prophecies and the passion

¹⁰ Crossan 1988, 30.

¹¹ In the actual analysis Crossan distinguishes more exact details within different layers, but he prefers to keep the thesis as simple as possible for the sake of verifiability (Crossan 1988, xi).

¹² Crossan 1988, 16–25.

narrative was created through allusions. The explicit citations from Scripture, which are found in Matthew, John and in the writings of Justin Martyr, represent a later phase in the development of the passion traditions. In the Gospel of Peter allusions to the passion prophecies form the content of the passion narrative. Therefore, the Gospel of Peter preserves an earlier form of the passion narrative than the canonical versions. In a detailed analysis of the passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter, Crossan presents an argumentation for the early form of the prophetic tradition.¹³

Crossan rejects the widely held conception that the Gospel of Peter – or more precisely the *Cross Gospel* – is more anti-Jewish than the canonical gospels. He admits that the Gospel of Peter is more hostile towards the Jewish authorities, but he argues it is less hostile towards the Jewish people than the canonical gospels. The lamenting of the people (Gos. Pet. 7:25) offers repentance to the Jews and provides a more positive outlook on the Jewish people than the infamous scene in Matthew 27:24–25. In the Gospel of Peter the repentance of the people (Gos. Pet. 7:25) leads to a division between the leaders and the people (Gos. Pet. 8:28). This causes the former to be afraid of the latter (Gos. Pet. 8:29) and only the conspiracy of the leaders prevents the people from becoming Christians (Gos. Pet. 11:47–11:49). Crossan argues that the Gospel of Peter does not represent a more developed anti-Jewish sentiment and the anti-Judaism does not support a later date for the Gospel of Peter. Crossan does not offer a detailed argumentation for the social setting of the Cross Gospel. Instead, he asks whether it should be placed in a Palestinian setting as early as the middle of the first century and with a Jewish-Christian community that had abandoned the Jewish mission in favour of the Gentile mission.¹⁴

Arthur J. Dewey took Crossan's thesis as his starting point, but developed it further with his own insights into the literary composition of the Gospel of Peter. He separates different layers in the Gospel of Peter by analysing the contradictions, interruptions and other redactional seams of the narrative. He identifies four different strata in the apocryphal gospel: an original layer, a story of the vindicated just one (Gos. Pet. 2:5c–5:15a, 5:16–

¹³ Crossan 1988, 33–233.

¹⁴ Crossan 1988, 400–401.

6:21, 8:28b), a secondary layer, an epiphany narrative (Gos. Pet. 8:28a, 8:29b–9:37, 10:39b, 10:40, 11:45), a tertiary layer of fragments and redactional elements (Gos. Pet. 2:3–2:4, 6:23b–6:24, 10:41–10:42, 1:1–1:2, 2:5a–b, 6:22–6:23a, 8:29a, 10:38–10:39a, 10:43, 11:46–11:49), and the final redactional layer (Gos. Pet. 7:25, 7:26–7:27, 11:44, 12:50–13:57, 14:58–14:60). The earliest layers were written before the canonical gospels and the extant text is independent of them. Dewey compares these reconstructed earliest layers to the genre of vindicated innocence and argues that there is a clear connection between this literary genre and his reconstruction of the earliest layers.¹⁵

The studies of Denker, Koester, Crossan and Dewey challenged the priority of the canonical gospels. They provoked several critical articles that questioned the claims of early and independent traditions in the Gospel of Peter. Joel B. Green explored the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. He criticizes Koester's thesis that in the Gospel of Peter the allusions to Old Testament prophetic texts offer proof of a very early phase in the formation of the passion narrative. Green uses the literary critical method to examine the Gospel of Peter's literary dependence on the canonical gospels. Green's analysis is limited to the study of the Gospel of Peter 4:10–4:13, and the similarities between the Gospel of Peter and Matthew, especially in the guard at the tomb narratives (Matt. 27:62–28:15, Gos. Pet. 8:28–11:49). He admits that a more extensive examination of the evidence would offer demonstration of the dependence between the gospels. Green regards the evidence as ambiguous and entertains the idea that the Gospel of Peter and Matthew drew on a common source. However, he concludes that in the crucial passages the verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter and Matthew support a literary dependence between them. The more developed apologetic in the Gospel of Peter indicates that it represents a later version of the same narrative. This judgement of the dependence on the crucifixion and the guard at the tomb narrative tips the scale in favour of the literary dependence on less

¹⁵ Dewey 1990, 101–127.

conclusive passages as well. Green also notes in passing the anti-Jewish tendencies of the Gospel of Peter.¹⁶

Franz Neirynck argues in his study on Mark and the apocryphal gospels that the empty tomb narrative in the Gospel of Peter 12:50–13:57 is literarily dependent on Mark 16:1–8. After a thorough scrutiny of the verbal agreements between the empty tomb narratives of Mark and the Gospel of Peter, Neirynck concludes that the latter clearly shows dependence on the former. He regards the omission of the angel's message to the women to tell to the disciples to go to Galilee as a redactional choice of the author of the Gospel of Peter. Neirynck dismisses the theory that a pre-Markan empty tomb narrative is preserved in the Gospel of Peter. Neirynck agrees with Crossan that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew the traditions concerning the themes of weeping and fear of the Jews from John and inserted them into the empty tomb narrative he drew from Mark.¹⁷

In his article on the relationship between the canonical gospels and the Gospel of Peter, Alan Kirk took a critical stance against Koester's and Crossan's proposals. He also rejected Brown's thesis of secondary oral dependence and defended the position of literary dependence on the canonical gospels. According to Kirk, the differences between the Gospel of Peter and the four gospels reflect the religious views and concerns of the author and his community. Kirk analyses the crucifixion scene (Gos. Pet. 4:10–14), the centurion's confession (Gos. Pet. 11:45) and the guard at the tomb narrative (Gos. Pet. 8:28–11:49). Kirk emphasizes the influence of the author's anti-Judaism in the crucifixion scene. He argues that the centurion's confession is placed in secondary position to the epiphany narrative in the Gospel of Peter. He also notes that the apologetic interest in the guard at the tomb narrative is developed further from Matthew's version of the narrative.¹⁸

Raymond E. Brown has been the most ardent critic of Crossan and others who have argued that the Gospel of Peter contains material that is earlier and independent of the canonical gospels.¹⁹ In an article published in 1987, he argues that the similarities between the canonical gospels and the

¹⁶ Green 1987, 293–301.

¹⁷ Neirynck 1989, 123–175.

¹⁸ Kirk 1994, 572–595.

¹⁹ See Schonhoffer 2011, 229.

Gospel of Peter are too significant to imply independence. At the same time, the number of differences, especially the striking lack of extensive verbal agreements, speaks against the literary dependence of the Gospel of Peter on the canonical gospels. Brown admits that some of the differences could be explained as the result of the author's redaction, but the disagreements are so extensive that the author's redaction alone does not account for the content of the apocryphon. Brown also notes the anti-Jewish features of the Gospel of Peter and suggests that they might reflect the redactional traits of the author. As a solution to the problems caused by the similarities and the dissimilarities between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels, Brown proposes that the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels is explained through secondary orality. During the second century, because of the dearth of manuscripts, most Christians knew the gospels mainly through public readings. The author had heard and perhaps read the canonical gospels, but did not have them on his desk when he composed his gospel.²⁰

Brown reiterates his position in his monumental two-volume study *The Death of the Messiah*. Alongside the commentary on the passion narrative, he devotes a separate chapter to the Gospel of Peter. In his monograph Brown's treatment of the Gospel of Peter is more extensive than in his previous article. He also mentions that *The Cross That Spoke* that was published after his above-mentioned article. Brown considers the possibility that the Gospel of Peter is a product of a conflict with the Jews. In support of this opinion, Brown refers to the polemic against the Jews and the implicit apologetics in the Gospel of Peter, but in the end he argues that these features could be inherited from previous generations. The penitence of the Jewish people (Gos. Pet. 7:25) complicates the matter further and consequently, Brown concludes that the Gospel of Peter's relationship to the Jews remains highly speculative.²¹

Susan. E. Schaeffer's study offers criticism of the claims made by Koester, Crossan and others about the early and independent material in the Gospel of Peter. Schaeffer criticizes provocative studies that propose an early date of composition for most of the extant evidence of the Gospel of Peter. She

²⁰ Brown 1987, 321–343.

²¹ Brown 1994, 1317–1349.

argues against the thesis that the use of Old Testament prophecies in the Gospel of Peter shows signs of an earlier form of the passion traditions than those found in the canonical gospels. Rather, their relationship demonstrates the opposite, the further development in the treatment of the Old Testament texts in the early Christian preaching.²²

Schaeffer also argues against form critical studies of the Gospel of Peter. She criticizes the claims that the Gospel of Peter contains an epiphany narrative that is earlier than the canonical gospels. According to Schaeffer, the author has developed the guard at the tomb narrative in the Gospel of Peter 8:28–11:49. The author attempted to provide proof for the resurrection and this led him to insert several apologetic motifs into the narrative. Schaeffer criticizes the thesis that the original context of the centurion's confession is in the epiphany narrative rather than at the foot of the cross as in Mark 15:39. Schaeffer does not regard the similarities between the transfiguration story of the canonical gospels and the resurrection scene in the Gospel of Peter to be significant enough to reflect a dependence between them in either direction. Moreover, the description of the earthquake does not support the priority of the Gospel of Peter over Matthew.²³

Schaeffer also criticizes Crossan's compositional theory. She argues that the linguistic evidence supports a late and unified composition of the Gospel of Peter. Schaeffer analyses the redactional scene preparations in Crossan's theory and claims that they are an integral part of the second-century Gospel of Peter. She connects verses 2:3–2:5 to the rest of the passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter with the argument that both share the exoneration of Pilate. These verses also seem to respond to the criticism that Jesus died cursed by the law and received a dishonourable burial. Schaeffer argues that these motifs are significant themes of the passion narrative in the Gospel of Peter. In verses 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:59 the disciples are hiding from the Jews. The author of the Gospel of Peter emphasizes that they could not have stolen the body of Jesus. The Gospel of Peter refers to the destruction of the temple as a point of contention between Christians and Jews. The hostile depiction of Jews draws a line between them and disciples. This

²² Schaeffer 1995, 15–33.

²³ Schaeffer 1995, 33–77

hostility, according to Schaeffer, echoes a real conflict between Jews and Christians at the time of the composition of the apocryphon. Schaeffer concludes that the apologetic and polemical redaction connect Crossan's proposed redactional scene preparations with the passion and resurrection narrative of the *Cross Gospel*. Therefore, the same second century author wrote them.²⁴

Schaeffer's own position is built upon Brown's study. Schaeffer argues that the theory of secondary oral dependence explains the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. She criticizes the methodology that scholars have used to support the literary dependence of the Gospel of Peter on the canonical gospels. Schaeffer argues that the verbal agreements of one or two words are not enough to establish literary dependence between texts. Comparison of whole sentences would, according to Schaeffer, lead to the conclusion that the Gospel of Peter is not literarily dependent on the canonical gospels. In a study of oral tradition and the formation of passion narratives she examines the evidence in the Gospel of Peter and argues that it is dependent on the canonical gospels through hearing oral presentation of these texts. Her analysis concentrates on the illustrative sections of the Gospel of Peter in verses 6:24 and 12:50–13:57, which share some of the most extensive verbal agreements with the canonical gospels. According to Schaeffer, the only solution that explains both the similarities and the differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels is secondary orality. Schaeffer does not engage in a redaction critical analysis of the text, because she claims that this method does not explain its differences with the canonical gospels.²⁵

Schaeffer is one of the few scholars who have discussed the social context of the Gospel of Peter in a more extensive manner. She takes a critical stance against Denker's position that the Gospel of Peter was written within a Jewish-Christian community with the purpose of converting some Jews. The anti-Jewish tendencies of the text are too hostile to have been used in the Jewish mission. Schaeffer proposes that the anti-Jewish sentiments of the

²⁴ Schaeffer 1995, 78–113.

²⁵ Schaeffer 1995, 119–146. In the actual analysis Schaeffer used the redactional efforts of the author of the Gospel of Peter to explain many of the differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels.

Gospel of Peter were the result of a persecution by the Jews, probably in the context of one of the major Jewish revolts. Schaeffer concludes that the Bar Cochba rebellion was the context of the persecution and ultimately the reason for the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter.²⁶

New approaches and old objectives

A more widespread interest in the Gospel of Peter was reignited by the studies of Koester and Crossan in particular. Both argued that the Gospel of Peter preserves traditions that are earlier than the canonical gospels. However, their positions are different in terms of what actually is early material in the Gospel of Peter. The discussion soon turned to refuting their claims and the Gospel of Peter was the centre of attention in a lively scholarly debate. However, the debate was not so much motivated by study of the Gospel of Peter, but instead focused on the position and status of the canonical gospels in early Christianity as Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele aptly observe:

“Notwithstanding the differences in opinion between Crossan and Brown, there are some remarkable similarities in their approaches. First, both scholars approach GP in terms of its relevance for the canonical gospels. Second, both are interested in the question of their dependence, and, third, both take the next logical step to focus on the question of chronological priority.”²⁷

The same observation can be extended to other above-mentioned studies as well. The Gospel of Peter became interesting again, because it was argued that it includes traditions pre-dated the canonical gospels, and it provides evidence of the formation of the passion narrative. The critical responses were mainly directed to demonstrating the priority of the canonical gospels. There was not much attention given to the Gospel of Peter beyond what was necessary to

²⁶ Schaeffer 1995, 241–255. Schaeffer’s earlier article about the guard at the tomb narratives presents the arguments of her later study almost verbatim (Schaeffer 1991, 499–507.) While Brown and Schaeffer admitted the possibility that the author of the Gospel of Peter had used some literary material, Martha K. Stillmann took this line of scholarship to the extreme end of the spectrum. She argued that only oral traditions were available to the author of the Gospel of Peter. Stillmann 1995, 114–120.

²⁷ Penner and Vander Stichele 2007, 351. See also Augustin 2014, 64.

demonstrate its later date of composition. The scholarship on the Gospel of Peter was limited in scope as Penner and Vander Stichele argue:

“Moreover, this modern scholarly dynamic, with its over focus on dependence issues, results in something quite important being missed in the study of GP as a result. First, GP is not studied as a unity in itself, but solely in light of the intra-canonical gospel tradition. Second, in focusing on similarities and differences with the canonical material, the inner logic and coherence of GP is not taken seriously and alternative interpretations than the ones offered by the canonical gospels are often not taken into consideration.”²⁸

The narrow approach to the Gospel of Peter also included a methodological problem. Green, Kirk and Neirynck focus on a few selected passages of the Gospel of Peter. Schaeffer and Brown offer more extensive analyses of the Gospel of Peter, but their analyses of the text are also more illustrative than exhaustive. Crossan deserves full recognition for going through the entire evidence and presenting the arguments to support his thesis in detail. This has exposed his work to strenuous criticism. Nevertheless, his study was for a long time the main volume in the scholarly discussion of the Gospel of Peter, because it was the most comprehensive study of the extant evidence.²⁹ Over a quarter of a century ago Crossan presented a challenge to those who regard the Gospel of Peter as dependent on the canonical gospels to present their case in detail.³⁰

“What was the purpose of such a composite digest and how exactly the logic of its purpose works in every detail? Why did the author decide to leave out this unit, change that unit and add some new unit?”³¹

²⁸ Penner and Vander Stichele 2007, 351.

²⁹ See Schonhoffer 2011, 229, 233.

³⁰ I would like present a passing note of criticism towards the double standard of the burden of proof in Crossan's book. Crossan 1988, x, 15 seems to imply if not actually uphold a double standard. He claims that a hypothesis “must be kept as simple as possible”. While I agree that an overly complicated hypothesis cannot be verified, it appears dubious to present a simplified hypothesis and demand proponents of an alternative solution to “explain the evidence in every detail.”

³¹ Crossan 1988, 14–15.

These are excellent questions and scholars advocating dependence on the canonical gospels have only begun to answer them extensively. Recently Crossan wrote that he remains unrepentant in the face of a nearly universal rejection of his thesis, because a comprehensive study that explained the evidence better had not been presented.³²

Crossan certainly raises a valid observation. Criticizing the work of others and cherry picking passages that best support one's own thesis and at the same time ignoring large sections of the evidence is methodologically unjustified. Both the similarities and the differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels are so notable that it is relatively easy to present arguments for dependence or independence when inconvenient parts of the evidence are omitted in the discussion. Taking the same position to its logical conclusion throughout the entire evidence leads to the same problems that have led others into different or even opposite conclusions. The responses to Crossan's study did not grasp the complexity of the issue in this regard. Arguing that Crossan or someone else has got it wrong does not solve the problem of getting it right. Crossan's unrepentant attitude in the face of the overwhelming majority of scholars was justified by the fact that there was no comprehensively argued alternative solution to the problems related to the formation of the Gospel of Peter. The thesis which Crossan has presented does not seem to be able solve the literary critical questions. This position will be argued throughout the pages of this volume as well. However, he has at least attempted what others passed over in silence. The opposite thesis that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on the canonical gospels needs to be supported with the same precision concerning the entire extant fragment of the Gospel of Peter.

Third quest: An important source of Early Christianity

In recent years the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels has not dominated the scholarship of the apocryphon. The Gospel of Peter is often considered later and in some form dependent on some or all of

³² Crossan 2007, 134.

the canonical gospels, but the interest has begun to shift to what the Gospel of Peter can tell us about of early Christianity. In the post-Holocaust world the hostile description of the Jewish people and leaders has often been regarded as the most striking feature of the Gospel of Peter.³³ Pilate and the Roman soldiers, who have a prominent role in the passion narrative of the canonical gospels, are essentially written out of the passion narrative and have a neutral or even a positive role in the resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter.

Tobias Nicklas has written several articles on the Gospel of Peter, but his article *Die Juden im Petrus-evangelium* is the most important study in this context. In this article Nicklas focused on the question of the presentation of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter. He observed that the description of the Jews was generally considered thoroughly anti-Jewish, but the issue had seldom been analysed in detail.³⁴ Nicklas argued that a detailed examination of the role of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter reveals a more nuanced description. He applied the method of character analysis to examine the Jews as characters of the narrated world of the Gospel of Peter. He examined the techniques the narrator used to characterize the Jews as well as the purpose of this characterization. Nicklas argued that this methodological approach provides insights into whether and to what extent the presentation of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter is anti-Jewish.

Nicklas's conclusion was that the characters of the narrated world are drawn primarily by describing their actions. The narrator's preferred technique of characterization was to create a contrast between the actions and statements of different characters. This characterization technique is also apparent in the description of the contrasting actions of the Jewish and non-Jewish characters of the narrated world. Another important aspect of the characterization of the narrator is the various allusions to the Old Testament. The characters of the narrated world are unaware that their actions fulfil the Scriptures, and hence the Jews do not realize that they fulfil the Scriptures when they murder the Lord. The fact that the passion of the Lord fulfils the Scriptures does not reduce their guilt, rather it emphasizes it.

³³ See Henderson 2011, 89, 224–225; Augustin 2014, 1–2.

³⁴ Nicklas also observed that the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter had been used as evidence of a late date of composition for the apocryphal gospel.

A crucial element of Nicklas's interpretation of the presentation of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter is the split that occurs between Jewish people and their leaders after the death of the Lord. In the passion narrative the people and leaders act together: King Herod commands the people and they crucify the Lord. The unity between the Jewish people and their leaders disintegrates in the resurrection narrative. The people realize the great signs that have accompanied the death of the Lord and begin to grumble and repent. The scribes, Pharisees and elders fear that the people will stone them and ultimately conceal the resurrection from the people. The narrator characterizes the Jewish leaders negatively in contrast to the repentant Jewish people. Nicklas concludes that the repentance of the people, which is also anchored in the Old Testament prophecies, indicates that the author did not exclude the hope that the Jews could be converted. Nevertheless, the author's description of the Jews as the murderers of the Lord and the role of the Jewish leaders in the resurrection narrative are clearly anti-Jewish.³⁵

Another notable example of the new perspective on the Gospel of Peter is the article collection *Evangelium nach Petrus*, which includes studies on the apocryphon from various perspectives. Joseph Verheyden's article on the purpose of the Gospel of Peter is probably the most directly relevant for the present study. Verheyden examines three suggestions concerning the purpose of the author's composition: the function of Peter as the narrator, the correcting or superseding of the canonical gospels, and the anti-Jewish content of the Gospel.³⁶ Verheyden is critical of all these proposals. Peter's character is not elaborated to play a more prominent role than it did in the canonical gospels, and Peter was already known as the author of 1. Peter, and according to Papias, he was also the authority behind Mark's gospel. The author's use of sources is seemingly indiscriminate. He did not wish to challenge the existing gospels and there does not appear to be conscious reflection involved in the process of using the canonical gospels. The same unreflected approach is characteristic of the anti-Jewish passion narrative. The author of the Gospel of Peter described the Jews as Jesus's murderers,

³⁵ Nicklas 2000, 206–221.

³⁶ Verheyden 2007, 291–292 also mentions docetic Christology as a possible motive for the composition, but aligns himself with recent scholarship which has rejected this interpretation (see below chapter seven).

because this is how Christians generally understood Jesus's death in the second century. The anti-Jewish sentiments are narrated without any systematic tendency. The Gospel of Peter does not have an overriding purpose and is more popular in nature.³⁷

The new perspective in the study of the Gospel of Peter is apparently visible in the comprehensive introduction, critical edition and commentary by Paul Foster. His critical edition provides photographs of each page of the manuscript, a transcription and a translation of the Gospel of Peter.³⁸ In the commentary of the text, Foster offers extensive text critical notes for the entire manuscript. In the introduction, Foster addresses a range of topics, including the discovery of the Akhmîm fragment, the history of scholarship, patristic references and Christology.³⁹ The most interesting and controversial part of the introduction is Foster's critical analysis of the other suggested fragments of the Gospel of Peter.⁴⁰ The introduction and the critical edition offers valuable insights, but the most relevant issues for the present study are Foster's analysis of the literary relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels, and the detailed commentary on the text.⁴¹

In the analysis of the relationship between the gospels Foster emphasizes the need to define the methodology in the examination of the literary dependence between texts. He defines literary dependence as excerpting passages from a written copy of another text in front of the author, but also as "drawing upon another literary work from memory".⁴² The dependence between two texts is established by observing significant portions of shared text. He admits that there are difficulties in agreeing how much shared text is needed. In addition, the possibility of an intermediate source complicates the question of a relationship between two texts. Foster offers cumulative evidence as the solution to the methodological problems of literary dependence of the Gospel of Peter. In his analysis of the Gospel of Peter's relationship to the canonical gospels, Foster reviews the previous scholarly discussion and concludes that the Gospel of Peter is both dependent on and

³⁷ Verheyden 2007, 281–299.

³⁸ Foster 2010, 177–205.

³⁹ Foster 2010, 1–57, 97–115, 147–168.

⁴⁰ Foster 2010, 57–91. See below chapter 2.2.

⁴¹ Foster 2010, 115–147.

⁴² Foster 2010, 116.

independent of the canonical gospels. The text includes significant borrowing and totally unrelated material. Foster argues that the author's redactional creativity or independent traditions explain the disagreements better than the use of a pre-canonical source(s). Foster approaches the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and each of the canonical gospels by examining the most significant similarities that are shared between only two gospels.⁴³

Foster argues that the literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and Matthew is extremely strong. The guard at the tomb is the most significant example and is an obvious case of literary dependence. Foster rejects Brown's thesis of a common source behind both accounts. He argues that the author's familiarity with Mark's empty tomb narrative explains why the women's visit to the tomb is taken from Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative. Foster concludes that Matthew preserves the more primitive version of the narrative, while the more developed apologetic in the Gospel of Peter is a sign of later development. Crossan's claims for the opposite direction of dependence simply fail to persuade. The guard at the tomb narrative forms the backbone of Foster's argument for the Gospel of Peter's literary dependence on Matthew. Foster presents Pilate's declaration of innocence, the earthquake, Joseph's own tomb and the disciples return to Galilee as other notable examples of the dependence. Foster concludes that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew Matthew, but adds a caveat that he did not necessarily consult a written copy of Matthew, but rather relied on his memory of reading the text in the past.⁴⁴

Foster warns that it is difficult to find early quotations from Mark in early Christian sources. Nevertheless, he claims that the Gospel of Peter's dependence on Mark is a virtual certainty. The dependence is demonstrated by the several Markan redactional features that are included in the empty tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter. The verbal agreement between the Gospel of Peter 12:53 and Mark 16:3 "provides extremely strong, if not conclusive evidence for the dependence of the Gospel of Peter on the Markan

⁴³ Foster 2010, 131–132.

⁴⁴ Foster 2010, 132–138.

account”.⁴⁵ The Gospel of Peter also mentions the hour of crucifixion, which is a unique feature of Mark among the canonical gospels.⁴⁶

The parallels between the Gospel of Peter and Luke are less conclusive, but there are nevertheless striking redactional features of the third gospel in the Gospel of Peter. The tradition of the penitent thief (Gos. Pet. 4:13–4:14) strongly suggests that the author was familiar with Luke. The theological trajectory of the tradition supports the priority of Luke and the differences between the narratives can be explained through rewriting of the tradition. This rewriting could have occurred without consulting a written copy of the third gospel. The author of the Gospel of Peter may have read or heard Luke’s gospel being read earlier. Among other Lucan redactional elements present in the Gospel of Peter are Pilate’s and Herod’s friendship (Gos. Pet. 2:5) and the people’s lament over the fate of Jerusalem (Gos. Pet. 7:25).⁴⁷ Foster argues that the relationship between John and the Gospel of Peter “cannot be demonstrated with any degree of certainty.”⁴⁸ He supports this conclusion by noting that the redactional features of the fourth gospel are almost absent in the Gospel of Peter. The beginning of the post-resurrection scene by the sea (Gos. Pet. 14:60) has a parallel only in John 21:1–23, but the narrative breaks off before a secure conclusion of the relationship can be made.⁴⁹

In his study on the Gospel of Peter, Timothy P. Henderson set out to offer new answers to the old question. His purpose was to examine more accurately the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels than had been done in the previous studies. Henderson approaches the Gospel of Peter from the perspective that a thorough study of the Gospel of Peter requires a hypothesis of its relationship to the canonical gospels. In order to explain the similarities and differences he proposes the category of a “rewritten gospel” as a description of the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. The term is a modified concept of

⁴⁵ Foster 2010, 141.

⁴⁶ Foster 2010, 139–141. Foster 2010, 141 also claims that the Gospel of Peter includes a parallel to “the astonishment of Pilate in relation to the speed of the death of Jesus (Mk 14:44–45a).” In the Gospel of Peter Pilate does not receive a word about the death of Jesus or express any reaction to it. The chapter of the verses is also incorrect since the incident to which Foster refers is narrated in Mark 15:45–45.

⁴⁷ Foster 2010, 142–145.

⁴⁸ Foster 2010, 145.

⁴⁹ Foster 2010, 145–146.

the “rewritten Bible” which has been used in the study of Second Temple Jewish literature (Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, and Jewish Antiquities). Henderson argues that these texts provide a better analogy to the author’s composition than a comparison with the synoptic gospels. The Gospel of Peter’s dependence on the four gospels is defined more accurately in terms of this category. The author of the Gospel of Peter demonstrates considerable freedom in the use of the canonical gospels. He was also familiar with independent oral and written traditions. Henderson concludes that his monograph is essentially a redaction critical study of the Gospel of Peter.⁵⁰

Henderson argues that the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter is characterized by apologetic and polemic. These tendencies in the redaction are a response to the social context in which the Gospel of Peter was written. The author of the Gospel of Peter has rewritten his sources in order to present apologetic and polemic when countering criticism from outsiders. Henderson argues that the external apologetic is directed to both Jews and Gentile who had been critical of Christians’ claims. The criticism against Christianity is preserved in various second century sources, most notably in the writings of Justin Martyr and Celsus. The outsiders’ criticism provided the motivation for the author’s apologetic rewriting of the traditional material. The Gospel of Peter also has a strong anti-Jewish tone. Henderson interprets that a real or perceived conflict with the members of the local Jewish community was in the background of this hostile description. Henderson concludes that the author of the Gospel of Peter was familiar with either a violent or a verbal opposition from the Jews. The conflict with the Jews provided a reason for him to describe the Jewish characters of his sources in the worst possible light.⁵¹

Philipp Augustin published an extensive monograph on the Gospel of Peter in 2014. In his monograph Augustin focused especially on the representation of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter. He connected the representation of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter to the history of Christian anti-Judaism. He noted that the anti-Jewish traditions of Christianity have led to various attacks against the Jews. He emphasized that the accusation that

⁵⁰ Henderson 2011, 1–2, 32–33.

⁵¹ Henderson 2011, 1–3, 41–42, 221–225.

the Jews killed Jesus has been part of Christian anti-Judaism from the very beginning (1. Thess. 2:14–16) up to the present time (www.jewskilledjesus.com). Augustin pointed out that after the Holocaust the anti-Jewish elements of Christianity have been extensively studied. An important aspect of this study has been to explain the origins of Christian anti-Judaism in antiquity. Augustin placed his study of the representation of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter within this larger context. The Gospel of Peter is an important source for this study, because its passion narrative describes in detail that the Jews killed Jesus. Augustin draws attention to the fact that the Gospel of Peter played only a limited role in the study of the relationship between Christians and Jews in antiquity. He noted that the representation of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter has been studied more closely only in recent decades and that there was still a need for a comprehensive study of the matter. The aim of his study is to comprehensively analyse the representation of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter and to contextualize these representations in terms of the history of theology. This analysis and contextualization serves the larger purpose of explaining the relationship between Christians and Jews in antiquity and the development of Christian anti-Judaism.⁵²

Augustin approached the Gospel of Peter and its presentation of the Jews from various perspectives. He analysed the proposed ancient textual and patristic witnesses to the Gospel of Peter and concluded that only the Akhmîm codex contains a section of the Gospel of Peter.⁵³ Augustin also examined the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and ancient gospel literature. He noted that the question of the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels has had a prominent question in the scholarship of the apocryphon. He approached this question by examining the main lines of the previous studies and the hermeneutical models that had influenced these studies. The main section of Augustin's study is a detailed study analysis of the Gospel of Peter that focuses on the presentation of the Jewish figures. Augustin approached the text with a narratological figure analysis of the thoughts, expressions and actions of the Jews in order to examine their characterization in the Gospel of Peter. He compared the

⁵² Augustin 2014, 1–2.

⁵³ Augustin 2014, 5–56.

conclusions of his analysis with relevant second century Christian texts. The aim of this theological historical comparison of the characterization of the Jews is to contextualize the Gospel of Peter and to demonstrate the purpose of the text. Augustin argues that this analysis provides an approach to answer the question why early Christians developed the anti-Jewish traditions of the Gospel of Peter.⁵⁴

Augustin notes that in the study of the apocryphon the question of the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels has received more attention than any other topic. Augustin examines the main studies on the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels and draws attention to the hermeneutical assumptions that have influenced the interpretations of the relationship between them. After this examination, Augustin proposes his own hermeneutical model to explain the relationship between the gospels. He argues that the Gospel of Peter should not be interpreted only in relation to the canonical gospels, but the proper model would be to interpret the apocryphon also within the framework of early Christian gospel literature. Augustin carried out the detailed analysis of the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and other early Christian gospels by comparing the description of the Jewish figures in the Gospel of Peter to other early Christian gospels. This literary and theological-historical framework provides the hermeneutical model which functions as a prerequisite for the detailed narratological analysis of the Jewish figures.⁵⁵

Augustin argued that the literary dependence model provides an explanation for the similarities between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels, but the structural and textual differences challenge this model, because it is questionable whether they can be interpreted as intentional changes.⁵⁶ Augustin also critically evaluated the tradition critical model, which assigned early and independent traditions to extensive sections of the Gospel of Peter, because this model placed too strong an emphasis on the differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels.⁵⁷ The secondary oral model provides a better explanation of the parallels and differences. The

⁵⁴ Augustin 2014, 2–3.

⁵⁵ Augustin 2014, 57–59.

⁵⁶ Augustin 2014, 63.

⁵⁷ Augustin 2014, 67–68.

problem with secondary orality is that we only have access to written texts and we do not have comparison material to the one later manuscript of the Gospel of Peter.⁵⁸ The social memory approach adds a socio-historical element to the author's use of written and oral traditions.⁵⁹ Augustin emphasizes that the author of the Gospel of Peter created his own version of the passion narrative. He used traditions of the canonical gospels creatively in order to create his own independent gospel. Augustin criticized Henderson's approach and questioned the validity of a redaction criticism as a methodologically sufficient approach to interpret the Gospel of Peter. He argues that secondary orality and the social memory approach prove that redaction criticism is an outdated and insufficient model to explain the Gospel of Peter.⁶⁰

Augustin concludes that the Gospel of Peter presupposes the traditions of the canonical gospels. The author creatively combined them with other traditions and created an independent narrative that reflects his own intentions.⁶¹ This new creation functioned as an independent narrative that had the specific intention of retelling the foundational narrative of Christianity.⁶² The author designed his gospel according to his literary idea and transformed the existing traditions into a new independent narrative that updates the foundational narrative for the intended second-century audience.⁶³ The author's present environment influenced the updating of the foundational narrative. Augustin analyses in detail the content of this updating and the theological-historical context that influenced it.⁶⁴ Augustin proposes that the focus of the study should be changed from the relationship between the gospels to the intention of the author. The study of authorial intention enables the study of the theological-historical location of the Gospel of Peter.⁶⁵ Augustin does not focus on a detailed comparison between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospel on a word level. He focuses on the

⁵⁸ Augustin 2014, 71–72.

⁵⁹ Augustin 2014, 76.

⁶⁰ Augustin 2014, 80–81.

⁶¹ Augustin 2014, 88–89.

⁶² Augustin 2014, 104–105.

⁶³ Augustin 2014, 109.

⁶⁴ Augustin 2014, 105.

⁶⁵ Augustin 2014, 103.

overall motives of the narrative and draws attention to the representation of the Jews as a particularly useful motive of comparison.⁶⁶

Augustin notes that the description of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter has often been mentioned, but seldom analysed beyond the observation of the anti-Jewish tendency of the Gospel of Peter.⁶⁷ Augustin examines the Jewish figures in detailed narratological figure analysis, which takes into account the intention of the author and the intended audience of his gospel.⁶⁸ In the narratological figure analysis Augustin examined how the narrator depicts the Jewish characters.⁶⁹ Augustin applies post-classical narratology in his analysis of the Gospel of Peter. This approach includes examining the addressees and the context of the text.⁷⁰ The purpose of this analysis is to understand how the narrator intended his audience to receive the image of the Jewish characters he had designed.⁷¹ Augustin does not provide a commentary on the text, but instead interprets the whole gospel through the characterization of the Jews.⁷² Augustin concludes that the Jewish figures play a crucial role in the narrative, and he focuses on the actions of the characters. The author of the Gospel of Peter intended to depict the Jews as the main characters of the narrative.⁷³ Previously the description of the Jewish figures was considered to reflect general anti-Jewish polemics and it was not analysed more closely. However, recently Nicklas and Kirk have demonstrated that the description of the Jewish figures is differentiated and is connected to the theological-historical location of the Gospel of Peter.⁷⁴

Augustin argues that the focus of the Gospel of Peter is not on the passion and resurrection of Jesus, but on how the Jews executed him and hid his resurrection. In the Gospel of Peter the Lord plays only a minor role and He does not occupy the focal point of the narrative.⁷⁵ The Lord is a passive secondary figure in the passion narrative and the Jews are the centre of

⁶⁶ Augustin 2014, 84.

⁶⁷ Augustin 2014, 110–112.

⁶⁸ Augustin 2014, 118.

⁶⁹ Augustin 2014, 123.

⁷⁰ Augustin 2014, 122.

⁷¹ Augustin 2014, 132.

⁷² Augustin 2014, 150.

⁷³ Augustin 2014, 276.

⁷⁴ Augustin 2014, 117.

⁷⁵ Augustin 2014, 135.

attention.⁷⁶ Augustin concludes that the focus of the narrative is on the Jewish figures and argues that they are the main characters of the narrative.⁷⁷ The narrative focuses on the Jewish people and their leaders. They hold a prominent role in the narrative and the central focus is on their actions and motives.⁷⁸ Therefore, Augustin primarily interprets the entire gospel by analysing the Jewish characters.⁷⁹

Augustin argues that in the resurrection narrative the author of the Gospel of Peter makes a crucial distinction between the Jewish people and their leaders.⁸⁰ After the death of the Lord the Gospel of Peter narrates a split between the Jewish people and their leaders.⁸¹ In the passion narrative all Jews want to kill the Lord. The miracles that accompany the death of the Lord lead the Jewish people to realize that he was just and consequently they repent their sins. The people grumble about their leaders, who decide to protect themselves by guarding the tomb and ultimately covering up the resurrection they have witnessed.⁸² The author thought that it was possible for Israel to repent.⁸³ Augustin, however, argues that the repentance of the Jewish people is too late, because they have already fulfilled the measure of their sins. However, they are not characterized as completely godless like the Jewish leaders.⁸⁴ The destruction of Jerusalem is God's punishment for the sins of the Jews.⁸⁵ Augustin also argues that in the Gospel of Peter all the followers of the Lord are persecuted by the Jews.⁸⁶ This is a central feature of the Gospel of Peter. The intended audience identifies themselves as followers of the Lord and the intention of the author is that they share the fear of persecution.⁸⁷ Persecution is a central element of the characterization of the Jews and it increases their negative religious identity.⁸⁸

⁷⁶ Augustin 2014, 284–285.

⁷⁷ Augustin 2014, 145.

⁷⁸ Augustin 2014, 150.

⁷⁹ Augustin 2014, 145.

⁸⁰ Augustin 2014, 15.

⁸¹ Augustin 2014, 117.

⁸² Augustin 2014, 279–280.

⁸³ Augustin 2014, 297.

⁸⁴ Augustin 2014, 280.

⁸⁵ Augustin 2014, 297.

⁸⁶ Augustin 2014, 136.

⁸⁷ Augustin 2014, 277–278.

⁸⁸ Augustin 2014, 399.

Augustin compares the conclusion of the narratological figure analysis of the presentation of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter to other early Christian texts that demonstrate similar elements. This comparison attempts to place the Gospel of Peter in a socio-historical context.⁸⁹ The theological-historical contextualization of the representation of the Jews aims to identify the intended audience and the author's intention. The depiction of the Jewish figures is a crucial aspect of the Gospel of Peter and its comparison to other texts assists locating its theological-historical context.⁹⁰ Is the intention of the Gospel of Peter to call the Jewish people to repent or to remind the members of the author's community of the possibility of a conversion of the Jews? Augustin notes Scheaffer's proposal that the Gospel of Peter reflects actual tensions between Christians and Jews and Henderson's thesis that the description of the Jews is directly connected to the argument between the two communities. However, Augustin argues that a more thorough comparison between the Gospel of Peter and other second century anti-Jewish texts is necessary to locate the theological-historical context of the apocryphal gospel.⁹¹

Augustin contextualizes the Gospel of Peter's presentation of the Jews by comparing it to the relevant ancient text. The Gospel of Peter depicts the Jews as guilty for the death of the Lord and the persecution of his followers. Augustin compares the Gospel of Peter to other second century narrative texts that share both of these characteristics of Jewish figures.⁹² The comparison demonstrates that the depiction of the Jews is different from the general anti-Judaism of the second century.⁹³ The complete responsibility for the death of the Lord is specific for the Gospel of Peter and its description of the persecution is more emphatic than in typical anti-Jewish texts of that time.⁹⁴ Augustin argues that the Gospel of Peter's comparison with the selected texts indicates that it was written in the context of a conflict between Christians and Jews. As a result of this conflict, Christians felt persecuted by

⁸⁹ Augustin 2014, 133.

⁹⁰ Augustin 2014, 300.

⁹¹ Augustin 2014, 118.

⁹² Augustin 2014, 292–293.

⁹³ Augustin 2014, 398.

⁹⁴ Augustin 2014, 399.

the Jews.⁹⁵ This conclusion is supported by the emphasis that in the Gospel of Peter all followers of Jesus are persecuted by Jews. This depiction in the narrated world is connected to the actual social situation. The intended Christian audience of the Gospel of Peter identified with the followers of Jesus, who were persecuted by the Jews. Figure identification connects the negative characterization of the Jewish figures with the real world of the author. The intended recipients identify with the Christian characters who are persecuted and at least unconsciously adopt a fear of the Jews. The social memory theory indicates that the emphasis on the persecution is not only a literary phenomenon, but it is connected to the author's social reality. The Gospel of Peter includes profound changes to the foundational narrative of Christianity. The foundational narrative influences Christian identity and the intended recipients' identification with the persecuted figures cannot be explained if fear of the Jews is not in some form present in the audience's reality. Augustin considers that this does not mean that the Jews actually persecuted Christians, but a strong fear of persecution is necessary to explain the content of the Gospel of Peter. The Jews are depicted as hostile opponents of Jesus and his followers. This stereotypical representation supports the conclusion that the Gospel of Peter reflects a real conflict between Christians and Jews. The hostile depiction of the Jews presupposes that the author and his community did not regard themselves as Jews. The threat of persecution in the gospel indicates that it was written in a conflict situation, the real conflict between Christians and Jews influencing the foundation narrative of Christianity. The stereotypical characterization of the Jews and the accusation that they murdered Jesus serve the intention of responding to this persecution situation.⁹⁶

The apologetics and polemics of the Gospel of Peter provide consolation in this conflict situation. The rewriting of the foundational narrative comforts the intended audience. Jesus and his followers were persecuted by Jews and the audience should trust God in the face of persecution. The resurrection of the Lord reminds Jesus's followers that they

⁹⁵ Augustin 2014, 401.

⁹⁶ Augustin 2014, 404–405.

too will be resurrected after martyrdom.⁹⁷ The Gospel of Peter is dependent on the canonical gospels and it was written in the second century in a context of conflict between Christians and Jews.⁹⁸ The author used their traditions with literary freedom and created a new and independent narrative of the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁹⁹ Augustin concludes that it is probable that the Gospel of Peter reflects a conflict between Christians and Jews and that the members of the Christian community felt persecuted by the Jews. The fear of the Jews in the narrated world becomes fear for the intended audience in the real world through figure identification.¹⁰⁰

Jeremiah J. Johnston focuses his study on the resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of Peter. Johnston examines the Gospel of Peter's description of the resurrection of Jesus within the framework of ancient Jewish and Christian beliefs of the resurrection. He examines the background of the belief in the resurrection in Jewish and Christian texts and places the Gospel of Peter within this wider cultural context. He argues that a comparative analysis of the Gospel of Peter demonstrates that it was written in the middle of the second century.¹⁰¹ He argues that pagan criticism against the resurrection narratives of the canonical gospels influenced the author of the Gospel of Peter and his apologetic redaction attempts to assure Christians of the reliability of the proclamation of the resurrection. Johnston examines both Christian and pagan author's who participated in the debate over the resurrection of Jesus. He focuses on the criticism of Celsus and Porphyry against the Christian claims and also draws attention to Trypho's objections. Johnston observes the anti-Jewish sentiment of the Gospel of Peter and connects it to the growing anti-Judaism of the second century. He argues that the Romans are relieved from the responsibility for the death of the Lord and Pilate is described positively in the Gospel of Peter. Johnston observes that other second century writings demonstrate a similar tendency. He also argues

⁹⁷ Augustin 2014, 405.

⁹⁸ Augustin 2014, 406.

⁹⁹ Augustin 2014, 408.

¹⁰⁰ Augustin 2014, 401.

¹⁰¹ Johnston 2016, 44–111.

that the polymorphic Christology of the Gospel of Peter reflects the social context of the second century.¹⁰²

Joel Marcus has developed further the thesis that the Gospel of Peter distinguishes between the recalcitrant Jewish leaders and the repentant Jewish people. He argues that in the Gospel of Peter the Jews are responsible for the murder of the Lord, but after His death the people immediately regret their actions. Marcus follows Crossan's interpretation of a sharp distinction between the Jewish people and their leaders in the second half of the Gospel of Peter – or more strictly speaking of the Cross Gospel. A striking feature in Marcus's interpretation is that the references to the Jews in verses 12:50 and 12:52 do not refer to the Jewish people, but only to the Jewish leaders. He argues that the term is not used consistently in the Gospel of Peter and this allows the interpretation that these verses refer only to the Jewish leaders, although the same term clearly refers to the Jewish people in verses 6:23 and 7:25. The distinction between Jewish people and their leaders reflects the author's view of contemporary reality. Marcus argues that the author held hope that the Jewish people would convert. He combines this interpretation of the text with Denker's thesis that the Gospel of Peter was written by and for Jewish Christians. Marcus supports this conclusion by referring to other second and third century Christian texts that share similar Jewish Christian traditions with the Gospel of Peter. He locates the Gospel of Peter to second-century Syria, where Jewish Christianity was an important faction. Marcus argues that the Gospel of Peter preserves the possibility that the Jewish people will repent and convert to the Christian faith. Moreover, he reconstructs the argument that in the lost ending of the Gospel of Peter Jesus appeared to the disciples, and commissioned them to preach to the Jewish people.¹⁰³

Studying the apocryphal gospel in its own right

The question of the Gospel of Peter's relationship to the canonical gospels dominated the scholarly discussion of this apocryphal gospel for more than a century. Until recently scholars devoted serious attention to the Gospel of

¹⁰² Johnston 2016, 112–172.

¹⁰³ Marcus 2018, 473–494.

Peter when it was argued that it either preserved pre-canonical traditions or when these claims were refuted.¹⁰⁴ The latter position often discussed only a limited selection of arguments from the former and concentrated most attention on passages that supported the Gospel of Peter's dependence on the canonical gospels. These efforts may be deemed successful in refuting the claims of the priority of the Gospel of Peter, but they do not solve the difficult questions in the study of this apocryphon. In the recent scholarship the Gospel of Peter has not only been seen as important as far as it is connected to the canonical gospels. In a time when canonical and extra-canonical are regarded as being less and less important distinctions in the historically oriented study of early Christianity, such efforts are most welcomed.

Crossan's plea for a comprehensive study of the material in the Gospel of Peter is more than justified from the perspective of the increased interest in the non-canonical sources during the formative period of Christianity. The Gospel of Peter is currently studied primarily not as a source of the canonical gospels or as a refutation of this thesis, but as an important witness to early Christianity in itself. However, this does not mean that the question of the Gospel of Peter's relationship with the canonical gospels does not or should not play a prominent role in the study of the Gospel of Peter as well. The similarities between them are too significant to be excluded in a comprehensive study of the Gospel of Peter.¹⁰⁵ I have quoted Penner and Vander Stichele, who argue that overt the focus on the relationship between the gospels hinders the study of the Gospel of Peter. While I agree that the Gospel of Peter needs to be studied as a valuable text in its own right, I also argue that very important insights into the Gospel of Peter are missed if its relationship to the canonical gospels is not examined. I examine the sources and the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter, but the examination is carried out from a perspective that is not primarily interested in the canonical gospels. The results of the source and redaction critical analyses are valuable apart from the canonical gospels, because they provide important information for understanding the inner logic of the Gospel of Peter. This approach reflects

¹⁰⁴ The discussion of the Gospel of Peter's Christology is the notable exception in this regard.

¹⁰⁵ Henderson 2011, 32 notes that "[n]o thorough study of GP can proceed without a hypothesis regarding its relationship to the NT gospels."

a transition in the study of the Gospel of Peter where it is regarded as a valuable source of early Christianity in its own right.

Foster and Henderson analyse the entire text of the Gospel of Peter and their studies advance the scholarship of the apocryphon. However, in terms of source criticism, their studies do not examine the Crossan's and Koester's arguments throughout the extant fragment. Foster examines the key passages that support the Gospel of Peter's dependence on the canonical gospels. In his commentary on the text, the more problematical sections of the narrative are not discussed from the source critical perspective. The outcome of this methodological approach is that the evidence that provides stronger support for the priority of the Gospel of Peter does not receive as much attention as the evidence that supports the priority of the canonical gospels. Foster argues that cumulative evidence is the most conclusive way to demonstrate dependence between texts, but he does not carry out this examination of the evidence in this regard. Foster emphasizes that the demonstration of a literary dependence requires a significant amount of shared text, and if the dependence between texts is established, the direction of dependence needs to be examined. Henderson is rather straightforward in solving the literary dependence by referring to the category of a rewritten gospel. His approach is, as he himself defines it, essentially redaction critical. Henderson bypassed many difficult questions about determining the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels.

1.3. Methodology

If we want to explain the anti-Jewish traditions of the Gospel of Peter, it is necessary to analyse both how the text was created and how it functioned as it is. These are complementary approaches to explain why the author of the Gospel of Peter wrote an anti-Jewish narrative, although the previous sources and traditions presented a different characterization of the Jews. The formation of the text is important for my research, because I examine the development of its anti-Jewish traditions, which is by definition an examination of a process that occurs over time. In the following

methodological chapter I will argue that the analysis of the formation of the Gospel of Peter should precede the analysis of how the text functioned as it is and the rhetoric critical analysis of how the text influenced its intended audience.

Recently Nicklas and Augustin have analysed the flow of the narrative and the development of characters in the Gospel of Peter. In his extensive study Augustin approaches the Gospel of Peter by analysing the narrative as it is. Augustin's narratological analysis provides many insights to the Gospel of Peter and its anti-Judaism, but it is not without its problems. The methodological problem in the narratological analysis – at least in the way Augustin applies it – is the inability to take into consideration the numerous and notable inconsistencies of the narrative. I argue that the fragment of the Gospel of Peter contains numerous inconsistencies. It is neither possible nor appropriate to go through all of them here. The most important inconsistency in the Gospel of Peter will provide a sufficient example to demonstrate the methodological problem in Augustin's narratological analysis. In the Gospel of Peter, Herod has the ultimate authority in the trial of Jesus and Pilate is subordinate to him. Pilate protests against the verdict, but is unable to prevent it and must request the body of the Lord from Herod (GosPet 1:1–2:5). In the guard at the tomb narrative (GosPet 8:29–11:49), however, Pilate is in complete control of the events. The Jewish leaders request soldiers from him and after the resurrection beg him to command the soldiers to remain silent about what they have witnessed. Herod is not mentioned at all and there is no explanation why the Jewish leaders do not approach him, although it would have been natural for them to do so in the light of Herod's authority in the trial and the fact that they share the responsibility for the death of Jesus. Instead they approach Pilate who has no authority or responsibility in the trial.¹⁰⁶ Foster argues that the narrative is incoherent, because the author has combined traditions from the canonical gospels.¹⁰⁷ Augustin refers to Foster's interpretation, but argues that the narrative is not inconsistent. His explanation is that Herod does not have his own soldiers and therefore the Jewish leader must approach Pilate: "Herodes

¹⁰⁶ See below chapter 5.1.

¹⁰⁷ Foster 2011, 373.

scheint nicht über eigene Soldaten zu verfügen, sondern die Ausführung seiner Befehle – und damit der gesamten jüdischen Führung – liegt in den Händen des Volkes.”¹⁰⁸ Augustin’s theory is not supported by the evidence. The Gospel of Peter does not mention that Herod does not have his own soldiers, and Augustin has to insert this detail into the narrative in order to support his interpretation of a consistent flow of narrative. It is unlikely that an ancient author or audience would have imagined that a king does not have his own soldiers and relies solely on the loyalty of the people to carry out his commandments. Even if this insertion is accepted, the narrative world of the Gospel of Peter becomes rather interesting. Herod, who has no soldiers to guard the tomb, has authority over Pilate, who commands Roman soldiers. And even if all this would be accepted, why is not Herod, who pronounces the sentence in the trial, among those who are interested in guarding the tomb? The author may of course create any kind of narrative world he wishes, but it seems to me that the narrative world which Augustin proposes is not credible. The only reason to propose such a narrative world – which is neither supported by the evidence nor has internal plausibility – seems to be the need to introduce narrative consistency into a text that is inconsistent. A far more plausible interpretation of the evidence is that the author of the Gospel of Peter has combined different traditions and this has led to an inconsistent narrative.

The development of figures is also problematic in Augustin’s narratological study of the Gospel of Peter in which he analyses the depiction of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter. He argues that the Jewish people have a change of heart and are possibly remorseful in scenes VII and IX, but in XIV they demonstrate anger against the women who go to the tomb: “Insofern erscheint es inkohärent, dass sie die Anhänger dessen, den sie als gerecht erkannt haben, verfolgen sollten. Wahrscheinlich liegt an dieser Stelle ein erzählerischer Bruch vor, an dem sich erzählte Zeit und die Aktuelle Zeit des Petrus-Evangelisten überschneiden. In der Angst der ersten Jüngerinnen und

¹⁰⁸ Augustin 2015, 217.

Jünger vor den Juden spiegelt sich die Angst des Evangelisten vor Juden in seiner Gegenwart.”¹⁰⁹

I argue that the Jewish people do not demonstrate genuine repentance, but rather a confession of their guilt (see below), but let us focus on Augustin’s analysis of the Jewish figures and the way he presents it. If the Jewish people repent in scenes VII and XIV, the description of Jewish people is inconsistent in the Gospel of Peter. They first mock, abuse and crucify Jesus, then repent doing this and finally persecute his followers. Moreover, this is the only instance in his analysis of the text where Augustin refers to the social reality of the author. This sudden insertion of another methodological approach is not explained, nor does he explain what this overlapping between the narrative world and real world implies in his analysis. If the fear of the Jews has influenced their persecution of the followers of Jesus, why has it not influenced the description of their “repentance”? The observation of the inconsistency and the reference to the author’s context simply do not lead anywhere and subject changes as abruptly as it appears. It seems that Augustin is unable to analyse the inconsistent narrative as it is and resorts to an explanation that is derived from the social context of the author.

When the narratological analysis encounters inconsistencies in the development of the narrative and figures, Augustin inserts details into the narrative and refers to a methodology that he does not apply to other sections of the text. I see no reason why narratological analysis cannot demonstrate that a narrative is inconsistent. This conclusion, however, raises the question how the flow of the narrative or the development of figures can be analysed when the narrative is an inconsistent combination of contradictory traditions or an inconsistent description of main figures that is influenced by the social reality of the author? The above-mentioned challenges in Augustin’s narratological analysis lead me to conclude that rhetorical criticism is a more appropriate approach to analyse the Gospel of Peter as it is. Neither the narratological analysis nor rhetorical criticism excludes the redaction critical analysis of the Gospel of Peter from producing insights of its anti-Judaism

¹⁰⁹ Augustin 2014. 267.

which are not reached by using other methodological approaches that analyse the Gospel of Peter as it is.

The Gospel of Peter and its anti-Judaism should be studied as it is, including how this text influences its audience and creates social reality. My approach to explaining the formation of the anti-Jewish traditions of the Gospel of Peter is to examine the sources and traditions that the author used, his redaction of these sources and traditions, and a reconstruction of the social context of the Gospel of Peter that is based on the analysis of the author's redaction and a comparison of the author's redaction to relevant literature of the second century.

The Gospel of Peter reflects a complicated literary, historical and social development. Therefore, an explanation of the anti-Judaism in the Gospel of Peter requires interplay of diverse approaches. In the present study various methods are brought into interaction with each other in order to explain the Gospel of Peter's anti-Judaism. This interaction between different methodological approaches requires a careful examination of their relationship.¹¹⁰ However, before their relationship is examined, each method is discussed individually in close detail. The methodological discussion of the

¹¹⁰ The methodology that is applied in this study reflects the wider methodological development in biblical studies where various new approaches have been introduced alongside the traditional historical critical methods. The introduction of new synchronic approaches to a field that has traditionally been dominated by diachronic methods has not proceeded without tension. An urgent problem is the lack of discussion concerning the relationship between the diverse methodological approaches. The tension and balkanization between the new and more traditional methods calls for an engagement between the different approaches. The ideal goal in a methodologically diverse discipline is to avoid unnecessary polarization and promote reciprocal interaction. (Catchpole 1997, 168; Kelhofer 2013, 224, 226.)

In the extreme forms of the dispute the validity of older tradition-historical has been challenged. It has been claimed that they fail to appreciate the finished product. A less critical approach has denied that any substantial advances could be made with the tradition-historical methods. Catchpole mentions the unease which more conservative scholars felt towards the historical critical methods as the third major source of scepticism towards the diachronic methods. (Catchpole 1997, 167.)

However, the evidence of the various stages is present in the early Christian sources and the need to map out the development of the traditions into the form that has been preserved to us is not obsolete. The traditional approaches need to be adjusted, but their abandonment is not justified. The historical critical methods and their results need to be evaluated and adapted to the insights and challenges which the new approaches have produced. The use of diachronic methods in turn can operate as a critical discussion partner with the synchronic approaches. (Catchpole 1997, 168.)

The new synchronic methods which examine how ancient texts attempt to influence and create new meanings are very much in vogue in biblical scholarship. (Catchpole 1997, 168.) However, they are not shortcuts to new advances in understanding the sources without a substantial danger of leading the interpreter astray. The most obvious peril in applying the approaches of disciplines where one has not been formally trained is a superficial understanding of the theory and methods that those research traditions promote. It may lead to an inaccurate, incomplete and in the worst case simply wrong application of the method. A related problem is the danger of presenting a new method to the study of a particular text without hardly any new insights to the interpretation of the text. Such a study can more or less repeat what is already known with the framework and vocabulary of a new approach. (Kelhofer 2013, 226. See also Luomanen 2007, 225.)

historical critical methods builds a foundation for the examination of the relationship between the different approaches. The rhetorical criticism and especially the social identity approach are discussed extensively in order to provide a comprehensive presentation of their content. The objective of the discussion is to explicate what each method actually analyses and what the limits of each method are. In this way it becomes possible to demonstrate how they need, support and correct each other. The discussion of the individual methods and the relationship between them demonstrates how the rhetorical criticism and the social identity approach can provide new insights into the study of the Gospel of Peter and the development of Christian anti-Judaism. The following methodological discussion is not written with the primary purpose of explicating the various individual methods. The different methodological approaches are described individually in rather close detail in order to facilitate discussion of the relationship between the different approaches. The study of the Gospel of Peter from various perspectives is not carried out to produce information of the separate aspects of the Gospel of Peter, but to construct a unified whole where the different methodological approaches function together. In the following, I will discuss the interaction between various methods. At the end of the chapter, I present a summary of the relationship between the different methods that are applied in this study.¹¹¹

The methodological thesis of this study is that the synchronic approaches that are applied in this study, rhetorical criticism and the social identity approach, are dependent upon diachronic approaches and the results of historical critical methods. The author's behaviour as a member of the Christian community and his use of rhetoric to enhance the community's identity arise from and are directed towards the social context in which the text was written. The author's response is not a direct reflection of this social reality, but it is nevertheless inseparably connected to it. The diachronic analysis of the text provides information on how the author composed his text,

¹¹¹ The main purpose of the methodological reflections is to provide a clear and explicit connection between the methods that are applied in this study. The methodological reflections are written purely for practical reason of studying the Gospel of Peter. However, they represent a modest attempt to bring more discussion into the methodological developments of the past decades. Hopefully such development will become more prominent in the future.

which is in turn used to reconstruct the social context where the author composed his text. The social identity approach is applied to analyse how the author of the Gospel of Peter acts as a member of the Christian community. Rhetorical criticism examines the author's use of rhetoric in relation to the social reality in which it was written. The following methodological reflections are written primarily to exemplify and justify this position.

Historical critical methods

The Gospel of Peter has a complex literary history. Its composition is examined with source, form and redaction critical methods. Although these methods study different stages in the development of the gospel traditions, they are closely connected to each other and their separation is somewhat artificial. Assigning different elements of a gospel to a particular stage in its development is also necessarily a statement about its other stages. Source, form, and redaction criticism form a unified discipline and are in constant conversation with each other. Their results have to be checked in light of each other and often the results of one approach are built upon another. Their common goal is to reconstruct and explain the various stages that led to the formation of the gospel as it now stands.¹¹² In practice, source, form, and redaction criticism are often applied together.¹¹³

In the present study, historical critical methods are applied together in the analysis of the Gospel of Peter. The study follows conventional historical critical methods that are used to separate different sources and to examine the redactional seams that connect them. Attention will be drawn to additions, amendments, expansions and rearrangements of the text that reveal its composition history.¹¹⁴ However, there are certain aspects in the application of the methods in the study of the Gospel of Peter, which need to be discussed. The research tradition of the source, form and redaction criticism in the study of the early Christian gospels developed primarily in the

¹¹² Perrin 1970, 2–3.

¹¹³ Perrin 1970, viii–ix.

¹¹⁴ Dewey 1990, 103.

examination of the synoptic gospels.¹¹⁵ There are some obvious differences in the study of the relationship between the synoptic gospels and the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. The most apparent of them is that only a fragment of sixty verses has survived from the Gospel of Peter. The fragmentary nature of the evidence presents different challenges to the historical critical study of the Gospel of Peter. Another important difference is the extent to which the narratives overlap. According to the widely accepted two source hypothesis of the synoptic problem, the similarities between the three gospels are explained by Matthew's and Luke's dependence on Mark and Q.¹¹⁶ Mark and Q are without substantial overlapping in the content or vocabulary.¹¹⁷ The situation is very different in the study of the Gospel of Peter where the preserved fragment has a parallel narrative with all four canonical gospels. The limited amount of available evidence has to be compared to not one, but four parallel narratives. The comparison of the Gospel of Peter with four parallel narratives leads to a different kind of literary critical examination than the comparison of two synoptic gospels.

In the study of the synoptic gospels, the available evidence is much more extensive and the relationship between the synoptic gospels is more straightforward than is the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. These differences have direct consequences as to how the historical critical methods are applied in the study of the Gospel of Peter. The results in the study of the Gospel of Peter are by necessity less conclusive than in the canonical gospels. As a consequence of this situation, the separation of the source, form and redaction criticism becomes more difficult in the actual analysis of the Gospel of Peter. These issues are discussed more extensively in chapter two, but for now, they serve as a reminder that in the study of the Gospel of Peter the use of source, form and redaction criticism cannot automatically be applied in the same form that they have been applied in the study of the synoptic gospels. The different process in the composition of the Gospel of Peter and the available evidence require that the use of

¹¹⁵ See Goodacre 2013, 354–356.

¹¹⁶ Goodacre 2013, 355.

¹¹⁷ The notable exception is the temptation narrative in Mark 1:12–13 par. Matthew 4:1–11 and Luke 4:1–13 (Goodacre 2015, 357).

historical critical methods be examined carefully. In the following I will discuss historical critical methods and consider how their application needs to be adjusted in the study of the Gospel of Peter.

Source criticism

The objective of the source critical approach is to examine the composite nature of the text and the sources that the author has used.¹¹⁸ The endeavour is complicated by the lack of agreement concerning the criteria or the extent of the evidence that is sufficient to establish literary dependence between texts.¹¹⁹ The different interpretations of the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels reflect the methodological problems of the theories of source criticism. Some scholars accept one or two shared words in parallel scenes as evidence of literary dependence, while others need more than seven or eight consecutive words in exact verbal agreement to reach the same conclusion. Foster notes that this allows too much freedom for a scholar to reach the conclusion he or she desires. It has been recognized that it is not self-evident what constitutes dependence or independence between texts. The literary sources cannot be forced into a set of rules that solve all questions of dependence between texts. Each case must be evaluated individually with close reading and common sense as the best guides in the endeavour. Nevertheless, there should be a broader discussion and agreement of the methodology of literary dependence between texts in biblical scholarship.¹²⁰ The following discussion will explicate how a source critical examination is carried out in the present study.

The dependence between two texts is usually established on the basis of a shared sequence of various traditions or extensive verbal agreement.¹²¹ These have been the crucial arguments in the study of the synoptic problem.¹²² However, the shared sequence of various traditions is not a useful criterion in the study of the short fragment of the Gospel of Peter,

¹¹⁸ Perrin 1970, vii.

¹¹⁹ Catchpole 1997, 172.

¹²⁰ Foster 2010, 117.

¹²¹ Catchpole 1997, 171.

¹²² Goodacre 2013, 356–358.

because the narrative of trial, abuse, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, empty tomb, and apparition follows a natural sequence of events that cannot be used to prove dependence. The examination of extensive verbal agreements is not conclusive either. In only two cases do the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels have extensive verbal agreement. Verse 8:30 has an exact verbal parallel of eight consecutive words with Matthew 27:64. Verses 12:53–12:54 have more extensive verbal agreements with Mark 16:3–4, but the verbal agreement is not consecutive. These extensive verbal agreements point in the direction of literary dependence. However, the number of extensive verbal agreements is limited and the few exceptions have received various interpretations that attempt to mitigate the thesis of the Gospel of Peter's literary dependence on the canonical gospels. For example, Crossan assigns verses 12:53–12:54 to the secondary intracanonical layer and reverses the literary dependence in verse 8:30.¹²³ Schaeffer explains verse 8:30 as a necessary element of the narrative which is therefore preserved in verbatim, while verses 12:53–12:54 is not extensive enough to demonstrate literary dependence, because the rest of the narrative lacks evidence of literary dependence.¹²⁴ The examination of the extensive verbal agreements alone is not conclusive enough to demonstrate literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels.

The relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels cannot be determined on the basis of a shared sequence or extensive verbal agreements. Therefore, a more comprehensive approach to the question is required. In a situation where the literary dependence between texts cannot be demonstrated by a direct comparison between the texts, an effective way to apply source criticism is to look for a lack of coherence in the text.¹²⁵ The contradictions in the text can be used to demonstrate that the author has combined originally separate sources in the composition of his gospel. In this study the use of originally independent sources by the author of the Gospel of Peter is approached through the examination of the inconsistencies and contradictions in the narrative. The relatively short

¹²³ Crossan 1988, 271.

¹²⁴ Schaeffer 1995, 164–169.

¹²⁵ Perrin 1970, 12; Catchpole 1997, 170.

fragment of the Gospel of Peter is riddled with inconsistencies in the narrative, which reveal that its composition is based on a combination of several different sources. These contradictory sections of the narrative are then compared to the canonical gospels in order to see whether their existence can be explained by the use and combination of originally separate traditions and scenes from the four gospels. For example, probably the most notable inconsistency in the preserved fragment of the Gospel of Peter is the above mentioned, unexplained shift of authority. At the trial Pilate is in a subordinate position to Herod, but in the resurrection narrative Pilate is in charge of the guarding of the tomb while Herod is not mentioned at all. A plausible explanation is that in the trial the author of the Gospel of Peter drew on Luke 23:6–12 and in the guard at the tomb narrative Matthew 27:62–28:15 is drawn upon.¹²⁶

Another way to establish dependence between texts is to demonstrate the existence of the redactional elements of one text in another.¹²⁷ The inclusion of several unique features of the canonical gospels in the Gospel of Peter has been the corner stone of their priority.¹²⁸ Their presence in the Gospel of Peter offers strong support for its dependence on the four gospels, but without extensive verbal agreements, they fail to demonstrate whether they are a result of literary or secondary oral dependence. This approach, however, does enable an examination of the trajectories in the development of the tradition. The gospels can be compared to establish tendencies in the development of the traditions and these in turn are used to define the relationship between the texts.¹²⁹ Somewhat paradoxically, the extensive differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels can be used to support the former's literary dependence on the latter. The author of the Gospel of Peter presents detailed and insightful solutions into the difficulties within and between the canonical gospels. The improvements seem to require a detailed knowledge of the gospels and this in turn implies a literary dependence on them. The redaction critical examination of the Gospel of Peter provides significant support for

¹²⁶ See below chapter 5.1.

¹²⁷ Catchpole 1997, 173.

¹²⁸ Brown 1987, 333.

¹²⁹ Catchpole 1997, 171.

interpreting its relationship to the canonical gospels.¹³⁰ However, this methodological approach moves past the border between source and redaction criticism and the study proceeds further to examine the author's redaction.

The limited amount of available evidence of the Gospel of Peter requires a creative co-operation of source and redaction critical analyses of the text. None of the above-mentioned source critical approaches are by themselves conclusive enough to demonstrate the literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. Only when the verbal agreements, the presence of unique redactional elements of the canonical gospels, inconsistencies in the Gospel of Peter and the detailed improvements in the gospel traditions are brought together, is their cumulative evidence substantial enough to demonstrate the Gospel of Peter's literary dependence on the canonical gospels.

My interpretation of the evidence is that literary dependence explains the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels better than secondary orality. A more cautious interpretation would be to conclude that the author knew the canonical gospels or their traditions. However, my analysis demonstrates that the author of the Gospel of Peter was able to rewrite the contradictions and problems between and within the canonical gospels in a manner that required a profound understanding of their content. This supports the argument that he worked with written copies of the canonical gospels. The ultimate purpose of my study is to explain how and why the author of the Gospel of Peter, who knew the passion traditions in the form that the Roman soldiers crucified Jesus under the orders of Pilate, decided to write a passion narrative where the Jewish people crucify Jesus under the orders of Herod. For this purpose, there is no substantial difference whether he used written copies of the canonical gospels or was exceedingly well aware of their content through secondary orality, although the former seems more probable.

¹³⁰ In the study of the synoptic problem redaction critical studies have supported the thesis of Mark's priority, because Mark's redaction is consistently difficult to explain or even inexplicable if he knew Matthew and Luke (Goodacre 2013, 358–359).

Secondary orality is often proposed as a solution to the apparent similarities and differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. However, the theory is rarely applied to the text in a comprehensive manner. The notable exception is Schaeffer's monograph. Schaeffer examines the most notable examples of literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels and argues that these had become fixed part of the tradition.¹³¹ Schaeffer's study is not often discussed in the subsequent literature. I have analyzed the actual detailed arguments which Schaeffer presents to support secondary orality between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. An extensive discussions of Schaeffer's analysis is carried out in chapter three of this study. The main argument against Schaeffer's analysis is found in the analysis of the empty narrative where I compare the relationship between Mark and the Gospel of Peter to the one that exists between Mark and Matthew/Luke. Matthew and Luke used written copies of Mark a few decades after it was written, but did not include the fixed texts and they are not found anywhere else in early Christian literature. Moreover, there are more extensive verbal agreements between the empty tomb narratives of Mark and the Gospel of Peter than there are between Mark and Matthew/Luke. Therefore, Schaeffer's analysis leads to the following conclusion: the author of the Gospel of Peter drew, possibly a century after Mark was written, on secondary oral traditions of Mark and produced a more extensive literary dependence between his gospel and Mark than the one that exists between Mark and Matthew/Luke. I find this conclusion less convincing than the alternative that the author of the Gospel of Peter had a written copy of Mark.¹³²

Redaction criticism

The redaction critical method analyses how an author has used his sources, what he has incorporated into his gospel, and which things are left out. Special attention is given to the modifications and alterations that the author has made to his source material, but the detection of all observable aspects of the

¹³¹ Schaeffer 1995, 120–135, 170–175.

¹³² See below chapter 3.4..

author's creative handling of the traditions is essential to the redaction critical analysis.¹³³ The redaction critical study examines the editorial activity of the author in order to demonstrate his intention and purpose in the composition of the gospel. This approach will provide answers as to how, and to some extent, why the Gospel of Peter developed in a more anti-Jewish direction than the canonical gospels.

In an ideal situation, redaction critical analysis builds upon the results of a source critical examination.¹³⁴ As Perrin points out, "The prime requisite for redaction criticism is the ability to trace the form and content of material used by the author concerned or in some way to determine the nature and extent of his activity in collecting and creating, as well as in arranging, editing and composing."¹³⁵ The Gospel of Peter hardly provides an ideal situation for a redaction critical study, but the author's activity can nevertheless be determined through careful examination of the evidence. I will carry out a redaction critical study of the extant evidence alongside the source critical examination of the text. However, in order to overcome the difficulties in the source and redaction critical analyses of the Gospel of Peter I will first study the extant fragment as a whole before proceeding to studying the individual sections of the narrative. This analysis provides an overall picture of the similarities between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels, which in turn offers some of the most conclusive evidence of a dependence between them. Second, I will examine the pericopes of the burial (Gos. Pet. 2:3–2:5a, 6:23–6:24), the disciples' activities (Gos. Pet. 7:26–27; 14:58–60) and the empty tomb (Gos. Pet. 12:50–13:57). Scholars who have argued for the priority of the Gospel of Peter have thought that these sections were written later than the canonical gospels. I will examine these sections of the narrative first in order to argue that their date of composition belongs to the second century and to detect typical features of the second century author. Third, I will analyse the resurrection narrative. The previous redaction critical examination provides evidence for the comparison of the resurrection narrative. If similar redaction is detected in a different section of the Gospel of

¹³³ Smalley 1977, 181–182.

¹³⁴ Perrin 1970, 30; Smalley 1977, 184–185.

¹³⁵ Perrin 1970, 2.

Peter, it offers support that they were written by the same author. Conversely, if the redactional features demonstrate different emphases, it provides evidence of several layers in the Gospel of Peter. Finally, the passion narrative, which is the most challenging section for the hypothesis of the Gospel of Peter's dependence on the canonical gospels, is analysed and the redactional elements are again compared to the results of the redaction critical studies given in the previous chapters.

The cumulative evidence of a thorough redaction critical study of the text provides consistent results. A meticulous comparison of the gospels reveals the characteristics of the author's redaction. The consistent themes, which run through the whole gospel, particularly when they are present in the changes, or additions the author has made to the traditional material indicate the author's tendencies.¹³⁶ Redaction criticism tends to focus on the changes the author has made to his sources and to overemphasize the differences between the gospels. The traditional material which the author has used without any substantial changes needs to be recognized as part of his redactional activity.¹³⁷

The connection between anti-Judaism and the redaction history of the Gospel of Peter is most apparent in the suggested repentance of the Jewish people. Crossan has argued that the text distinguishes between penitent Jewish people and their unrepentant leaders. Crossan's ideas concerning the distinction between Jewish people and Jewish leaders need to be discussed in the context of the Gospel of Peter's redaction history, because upholding this distinction requires that Crossan's composition theory of the Gospel of Peter is upheld as well. According to Crossan's interpretation, the miracles during the passion narrative lead the people to repent. The Jewish leaders fear the murmuring people. They want to guard the tomb lest his disciples come and steal the body, which would lead to the people believing in his resurrection and doing harm to their leaders. Crossan's argues that the people repent, but the leaders are unrepentant and that the *Cross Gospel* distinguishes between the people and the leaders in this manner.¹³⁸ I argue

¹³⁶ Perrin 1970, 8–9.

¹³⁷ Smalley 1977, 187–188; Catchpole 1997, 174.

¹³⁸ Crossan 1988, 262–265.

that the people do not express genuine repentance, but instead confess of their sins and remorse of the judgement they face as a consequence of their sins.¹³⁹ I will present a different interpretation of the Gospel of Peter, but for the sake of the argument let us presume that Crossan's interpretation is correct and the narrative logic follows as he has presented, namely the narrative logic of the *Cross Gospel*.¹⁴⁰ However, this is not the narrative logic of the Gospel of Peter. In the empty tomb narrative (Gos. Pet. 12:50–13:57) it is mentioned several times that the women fear the Jews who are filled with wrath. How can a repentant people suddenly be full of wrath against the women who want to visit Jesus's tomb? The hostile description of the Jews in the empty tomb narrative indicates that they have not repented. Crossan argues that the *Cross Gospel* ended at the resurrection narrative and did not include the empty tomb narrative. This was only inserted into the narrative later. The hostility of the Jews against the women demonstrates that they have not repented and their lamentation is not a sign of repentance of their actions, but remorse on account of the judgement they face. At the very least the narrative is not consistent and it is incorrect to claim that it distinguishes between the Jewish leaders and the people.¹⁴¹

Nicklas builds on Crossan's theory of the distinction between the Jewish leaders and Jewish people, but rejects the composition theory which is crucial for upholding the narrative logic. In his article he examines only the passion and resurrection narratives of the Gospel of Peter. Nicklas ignores the description of the Jews in the empty tomb narrative. This omission undermines his analysis of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter and contradicts his methodological approach in analysing the text as it is. If the Gospel of Peter is analysed as it is, a methodological approach that Nicklas strongly emphasizes, the interpretation of the genuine repentance of the Jewish people should be rejected and therefore the theory of the distinction between the Jewish people and Jewish leaders also becomes problematic. Crossan at least has presented an internally consistent argument that takes into consideration the whole evidence. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss Crossan's *Cross Gospel*, despite

¹³⁹ See below chapter 5.6.

¹⁴⁰ Crossan 2007, 128.

¹⁴¹ See below chapter 5.6.

the fact that it has been so often rejected. However, ultimately his theory of the composition history cannot be supported. This is the reason why I discuss the distinction between Jewish people and Jewish leaders in the context of Crossan's redaction history of the Gospel of Peter.

The goal of the redaction critical analysis is to discover the author's intention. As Smalley argues, by analysing "the way he has selected and used his material, it is possible to suggest why he wrote his Gospel in the first place".¹⁴² In other words, the author's treatment of his sources is used to reconstruct his purpose. Once the author's intention has been discovered, it becomes possible to examine the gospel in the light of the author's main purpose. This in turn provides a firmer position to understand the overall composition of the gospel.¹⁴³

Redaction critical analysis is valuable in itself, but it also provides a stepping-stone for the reconstruction of the social context behind the gospel. The presupposition is that the final form of the gospel was shaped in and by a particular setting.¹⁴⁴ The gospel served a definite purpose in the social setting of the community where it was written and had the function of meeting the concerns that arose in the social situation. The author's purpose reflects this situation and functions as a response to the problems. The redaction critical insights of the author's role in the development of the gospel tradition can be used to reconstruct the historical situation to which they are connected.¹⁴⁵

Social context

The Gospel of Peter contains several anti-Jewish features. In order to explain the development of the anti-Jewish gospel tradition, the social factors that contributed to the development, need to be taken into consideration. The underlining assumption in this study is that there is a connection between the early Christian gospels and the social context in which they were written. The presupposition is that the author's efforts are related to the issues and problems that he encountered in his own social reality. An understanding of

¹⁴² Smalley 1977, 191.

¹⁴³ Perrin 1970, 23–24, 29–31.

¹⁴⁴ Smalley 1977, 187.

¹⁴⁵ Perrin 1970, 31–31, 34, 38–39.

the social situation is vital to the interpretation of the gospel. Therefore, it is necessary to study the kind of social context in which the Gospel of Peter was written. How did the particular social context affect the development of Christian anti-Judaism and how did the anti-Judaism function in the social situation in which it was originally written?

The reconstruction of a social context behind an ancient text that does not offer any direct indication of the situation in which it was written, has to be primarily deciphered from the few indirect hints in the text itself. The fragmentary evidence of the Gospel of Peter requires that relevant contemporary evidence plays a significant role in the reconstruction of the social context of the apocryphal gospel. These are two intertwined paths in the effort to reconstruct the social context behind the Gospel of Peter.

First, the historical critical analysis of the various stages in the development of the gospel tradition produces information that can be used in the reconstruction of the social context behind the Gospel of Peter. The survey of the research history above has made it clear that the way a scholar interprets the literary history of the Gospel of Peter influences the way he or she reconstructs the social context and the Christian-Jewish relation behind the text. Source, form and redaction critical studies provide insights into the sources the author has used and how he has transformed the available traditional material. The author's treatment of traditional material provides evidence for a hypothesis of the social context behind the text. In other words, the cause can be carefully deduced from the reaction. This statement does not imply a naïve and direct mirror reading of the context from the source or from the author's redaction. The author's efforts do not directly inform the nature of the social reality, but neither should they be excluded in the study of the social context behind the text. In fact, they are the best source of information concerning historical questions. Redaction critical studies can offer results that can be used to present a plausible hypothesis of the social context of the Gospel of Peter. Although the redaction critical study of the author's efforts often produces the most vital clues to the reconstruction of the gospel's social setting, this material should not lead to negligence of the sources he has used

nor the final product. These different aspects of the text are analysed carefully and receive their proper role in the reconstruction of the historical context.

Second, the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter should be examined within a wider framework of second century texts that are relevant for the interpretation of the Gospel of Peter. I argue that the key to understanding the Gospel of Peter is to compare the apologetic redaction of the author to the second century texts. This comparison reveals the correspondence between Jewish criticism of gospel traditions and the apologetic redaction of the author.¹⁴⁶ In Henderson's and Augustin's studies the Gospel of Peter has been placed in the broader context of second-century texts. Augustin devotes an entire chapter to comparing the Gospel of Peter to other early Christian texts. Henderson analyses each section of the Gospel of Peter and at the end of each chapter he compares the Gospel of Peter to early Christian parallels. While these comparisons reveal some of the wider anti-Jewish tendencies of the second-century, they do not provide an explanation why these anti-Jewish traditions were formed and developed. My purpose is to explain the formation of the Christian anti-Judaism traditions that are preserved in the Gospel of Peter. I argue that a comparison of the author's apologetic redaction to the relevant texts of the second-century provides a better approach than the attempts to place the text itself in wider literary context of the second century. A wider literary context is necessary for the study of the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter. My approach provides an alternative approach to the same topic that is more fruitful in explaining why the anti-Jewish traditions of the Gospel of Peter *were formed in the first place*. In the end, this alternative approach derives from the different main research question and the appropriate methodology to study it that I have described in this chapter.

The path to study the social context of a text is to compare the evidence in the text to the relevant contemporary sources and the information gathered from them. In the study of the Gospel of Peter the comparison focuses primarily on the Christian writings of the second century. If similar circumstances or relations are depicted in other contemporary sources, this

¹⁴⁶ See below chapter 6.3.

can offer support for reconstruction of the social context. The results of the redaction critical study are of primary concern when the evidence from the Gospel of Peter is compared to other source material. If the author's redaction corresponds to circumstances depicted in other contemporary sources, it can be argued that similar circumstances also existed behind the text that does not give direct clues of its social context.

The reconstruction of the social context of the Gospel of Peter is carried out within the framework of the wider social context of second-century Christianity. The relationship and interaction between Christians and Jews is of particular interest in the attempt to explain the anti-Judaism in the Gospel of Peter. The crucial question is whether the Jews persecuted, in any sense of the word, Christians during this time. The question of persecution is a vital aspect of the larger issue of how did the relationship between Christians and Jews continue or disintegrate in the second century. The hostile polemic against the Jews and the relatively positive description of the Romans in the passion and resurrection narratives inevitably poses the question whether the Gospel of Peter should be primarily understood as a pro-Roman or anti-Jewish text. This opens up a perspective to the relationship between Christians and Roman officials, and by extension to the wider Gentile society that surrounded the Christian community. Recent decades have brought forth several new insights into these issues that need to be incorporated into the discussion of the social context behind the Gospel of Peter. Answering these questions offers information on the background and frames of the Jewish-Christian relations in which the image drawn from the evidence of the Gospel of Peter is placed.

A social-psychological perspective on the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter

The Gospel of Peter depicts the Jewish people as the responsible for the death of the Lord. This representation does not contain any reliable information about their involvement in the historical event. It is instead a social construction where one religious group defines another in its own terms. As such, this construction can be analysed in terms of social psychology. The

polemical descriptions of “others” – whether they are Jews, Gentiles or heretics – in early Christian sources and the formation of Christian identity through such a hostile description have been at the frontline of recent social scientifically oriented approaches in biblical scholarship. In this study the negative image of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter is analysed in the light of the so-called social identity approach.

The social identity approach is a socio-psychological theory that seeks to understand the individual human being as a member of a group/groups and the interaction between groups. A large part of human life is related to the groups, to which individuals do or do not belong.¹⁴⁷ Being a member of a group influenced how people organize their social world and it has direct consequences for their behaviour.¹⁴⁸ The social identity approach provides a theory of intergroup relations that functions as a two-way link between social situations and social behaviour. It analyses the cognitive and motivational structures of the mind in order to explain the causal relationship between society and the individual.¹⁴⁹ The social identity approach theorizes about the psychological processes that are necessary building blocks in the formation of groups, but it does not exclude the importance of the historical and ideological aspects of social groups.¹⁵⁰ The central tenet of the social identity approach is that group behaviour should be observed in a non-reductionist manner as qualitatively different from individual, personal behaviour. People define themselves not only in terms of a personal identity, but also in terms of their social identity.¹⁵¹ The identity of an individual moves along an interpersonal-intergroup continuum depending on the salience of personal or social identity in a particular situation. Personal identity includes an individual’s personal characteristics that are salient in interpersonal encounters. Social identity, in turn, is the part of an individual’s self-concept, which is derived from internalized group membership.¹⁵²

The social identity approach offers a promising new perspective to examine why the Christian author of the Gospel of Peter created a hostile

¹⁴⁷ Tajfel 1969, 81.

¹⁴⁸ Turner et al. 1987, 12.

¹⁴⁹ Tajfel 1969, 80.

¹⁵⁰ Turner et al. 1987, 2.

¹⁵¹ Hogg and Abrams 1988, 12–13; Turner 2004, xix, xxi; Haslam 2004, 14, 17.

¹⁵² Haslam 2004, 21–22.

description of the Jews. In the following the social identity approach is described in a rather extensive manner in order to explain what new insights it can bring into the study of the Gospel of Peter's anti-Judaism. A key aspect of this examination is to present what are the cognitive and motivational aspects of the mind that govern the formation of groups, and how the social identity of an individual affects his or her behaviour in social situations that involve the interaction between groups. However, the social identity approach does not provide means to explain an ancient gospel text and it is not directly applicable in the study of the Gospel of Peter. Therefore, it has to be decided how the social identity approach can be used in the study of the Gospel of Peter and how it relates to the study and results of the historical critical study. The purpose of the methodological discussion is to explicate how the social identity approach can be applied to explain an ancient text that has been written in a particular social context. It will be argued that in the study of the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter the social identity approach provides an empirically tested theory to explain the relationship between the social behaviour of an individual, i.e. the author's composition of his text, and the social situation, i.e. the social reality behind the Gospel of Peter. The theories and insights of the social identity approach are used to explain why the author of the Gospel of Peter denigrated the Jews.

The social identity approach

The social identity approach is an umbrella term that encompasses the social identity theory and the so-called self-categorization theory along with their subsequent developments. Both theories derive from the same research tradition and are closely related to each other, particularly in the use of the concept of social identity. Despite their significant overlap, they seek to answer distinct questions.¹⁵³ Henri Tajfel led the development of the social identity theory in the 1970s. The main goal of the research was to explain group behaviour and especially intergroup discrimination. The social identity theory seeks to explain intergroup behaviour of individuals as members of

¹⁵³ Hogg and McGarty 1990, 10–11. See also Luomanen, Pyysiäinen and Uro 2007, 21.

different social groups. The self-categorization theory is mainly identified with John C. Turner. It is a development and redefinition of some issues raised by the social identity theory. It focuses on explaining group membership and group behaviour from the point of view of the individual. The self-categorization theory examines how individuals define themselves as members of the same group and how that shared social identity enables group behaviour. In simplified terms, the social identity theory examines intergroup behaviour and the self-categorization theory examines intragroup behaviour. This statement, however, should be understood more as an illustration of the difference between the two theories rather than as a sharply defined division between them.¹⁵⁴

The effect of value and classification on the judgement of physical stimuli

Tajfel's unique approach to the question of intergroup relationships stemmed from his background research on judgement processes and particularly empirical experiments on the categorization effects of perception. This perspective brought cognitive functioning to the heart of social psychology.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Turner 2004, xvii-xix; Haslam 2004, 14, 28–29.

¹⁵⁵ Oakes 1994, 35. Tajfel's early study focused on the influence of motivational or value features on perceptual overestimation. His evaluation of the empirical evidence led to the hypothesis of accentuation of differences. According to the hypothesis when a physical dimension of a stimuli is judged in a series where the variation in magnitude changes concurrently with value dimension, a larger accentuation of differences occurs than in neutral series where such a variation does not connect the value and physical dimensions consistently. (Tajfel 1957, 192–204, especially 192–193, 202–203.) A seminal study of the overestimation of differences in valued series demonstrated that the subjects perceived the difference between largest and smallest coins as much more extensive than the difference between largest and smallest discs of cardboard or aluminium in neutral series (Bruner and Goodman 1947, 33–44).

Tajfel proposed that the same overestimation is part of social perception as well. The difference in value of social objects that belong to distinct categories should accentuate the perceived differences in comparison to the existing objective differences. Tajfel referred to a conception formulated by Hochberg: "If a group of individuals is perceived as different from the non-group individual, the perceived differences between those within the group and those outside the group will automatically be sharpened, and the differences perceived between the members of the group (i.e., intragroup differences), and between those outside the group will be lessened." (Hoghberg)

Tajfel regarded the judgmental effects of categorization as fairly universal, but suggested that they are more pronounced when the judgment is simultaneously made on a dimension of value as well. There will likely be a pronounced perception of difference between individuals who are assigned to different social categories, when the separating factor has some social value. (Tajfel 1957, 202–203.)

The effect of value and classification on judgement of physical magnitude of stimuli offered a promising path of studying perception overestimation. Tajfel formulated a theoretical schema for the interaction of these three variables to predict how the various combinations shift judgement in different series. "When a classification in terms of an attribute other than the physical dimension which is being judged is superimposed on a series of stimuli in such a way that one part of the physical series tends to fall consistently into one class, and the other into the other class, judgements of physical

In formulating his theoretical schema of the effect of classification on perception, Tajfel noted that it had not been sufficiently examined in laboratory conditions.¹⁵⁶ He designed and carried out together with A. L. Wilkes a set of experiments to test the hypothesis that classification affects the judgement of physical stimuli and to produce empirical evidence to support it.¹⁵⁷ The experiments did not produce direct evidence that classification affects an increased sense of similarity of the judged physical dimension in the same class. However, this judged similarity did clearly increase as the experiment of the classified groups progressed within the same session. Repeated and frequent experience seemed to accentuate the perceived similarity of stimuli within the same class.¹⁵⁸

magnitudes of the stimuli falling into the distinct classes will show a shift in the directions determined by the class membership of the stimuli, when compared with judgements of a series identical with respect to this physical dimension, on which such a classification is not superimposed.” (Tajfel 1959, 20.) For an explicit formulation of the various possible combinations of the three variables in different series see Tajfel 1959, 21–28.

The prediction of the effect of classification on judgement of physical stimuli was similarly dependent on the consistency between the two as was the case with the effect of value on judgement of physical stimuli. Tajfel also proposed that when value and classification were present together, they would produce a more pronounced shift in the perceived physical dimension than in the situation quoted above. Once again the judgement of physical stimuli was regarded as a simplified form of social perception. (Tajfel 1959, 18–21.) In support of this proposal Tajfel referred to a study by Secord et al. 1956. Their study demonstrated that prejudiced and non-prejudiced individuals accentuated the differences between physical characteristics of different ethnic groups, but the prejudiced subjects accentuated the differences more than the non-prejudiced subjects. In other words, both accentuated the differences in perception of physical stimuli on the basis of classification, but the emotional or value relevance of the prejudiced individuals led them to judge a more sharp accentuated differences.

¹⁵⁶ Tajfel 1959, 24.

¹⁵⁷ The method of the study was to present eight lines of different length between 16.2 cm and 22.9 cm to the subjects of the experiments. The lines were drawn diagonally on a large 50.8 cm x 63.5 cm white cardboard to limit the information provided by the frame. Each line was presented six times in random order. The subjects were not informed how many different lines of varying length they were shown. The subjects were asked to judge the length of each line that was presented to them by the experimenter. The same subjects were tested a week later in another session to examine the effect of past experience.

The subjects were divided into five different groups. The lines shown to the subjects were identical between the groups, but they differed in the classification of the lines into different series. This was done to examine the effect of classification on the physical perception. Group C (classified) were presented with four short lines that had a letter A drawn above the line and letter B above four short lines. The subjects of group R (random) were shown each line three times with a letter A and three times with a letter B above them. In the group U (unclassified) the lines were shown without any letters attached to them. Groups C□ and U□ had similar conditions as in groups C and U respectively.

The results of study showed that the subjects in the classified groups C and C□ exaggerated the difference between stimuli 4 and 5, i.e. the difference between stimuli in the classification A and B. Similar inter-class accentuation of differences was not observed in the control groups R, U or U□ that all produced similar results. The consistent classification in relation to the physical dimension that was being judged led to an accentuation of the perceived differences between the two classes. The conclusion of the experimental results is as follows: “A classification superimposed on a series of stimuli in such a way that there is a consistent and direct relationship between the magnitudes of the stimuli and the division of the stimuli into two classes determines a significant increase of the apparent differences between the stimuli at the point of transition from one class to another. This does not happen when the classification superimposed on the series does not stand in a coherent relationship to the physical dimension.” (Tajfel and Wilkes 1963, 112–113.)

¹⁵⁸ Tajfel and Wilkes 1963, 112–113.

The researchers defined their findings as a simplified exercise in stereotyping. They anticipated that the results also had wider implications for the judgement of social stimuli. The same accentuation of differences between the length of lines in different classes and similarity within classes might also affect group formation. The judgements of complex social situations between different groups could therefore be reduced to simpler principles of psycho-physical judgement situations. They proposed that the judgement of physical and social phenomena could be understood in terms of the same general principles.¹⁵⁹

Stereotypes are in effect the consequence of accentuated classifications.¹⁶⁰ The subjective accentuation of difference between different classes of stimuli and their reduction within the same classes is the essential feature of social stereotype formation. The existence of similar cognitive processes in the perception of social stimuli seemed a reasonable assumption that demanded empirical evidence to support it. A fundamental difference in the perception of physical stimuli, such as the length of lines, and the perception of social stimuli, lies in emotional investment in the stereotypical judgements between in-group and out-group. Therefore, the effect of this emotional value could not be overlooked in the formation of social stereotypes, as was possible in the case of physical stimuli.¹⁶¹

Minimal group paradigm

The empirical evidence for the social identity theory was produced in a set of controlled experiments that later became known as the minimal group experiments. Tajfel and his colleagues set out to specifically identify the necessary or minimal sufficient conditions of intergroup discrimination. The research plan was to create groups that were at first as meaningless as possible and then begin to increase the significance of the groups to discover the minimal conditions for intergroup discrimination.¹⁶² Already in the first experiments, where no visible significance was attached to the groups, the

¹⁵⁹ Tajfel and Wilkes 1963, 113–114.

¹⁶⁰ Tajfel 1959, 24.

¹⁶¹ Tajfel 1969, 85–86.

¹⁶² Tajfel et al. 1971, 150–151; Turner et al. 1987, 26–27; Haslam 2004, 18.

subjects preferred to favour their in-group regardless of whether it resulted in the gain or loss of the maximum common good.¹⁶³ In a second study, subjects also sacrificed the maximum objective gain of the in-group to achieve maximum differentiation between the groups. The effect of maximum differentiation was observed to be more important to the subjects than the combined effect of the maximum common good and the objective gain of the in-group together.¹⁶⁴ The subjects acted in this manner regardless of the effect

¹⁶³ Tajfel et al. 1971, 167–169; Hogg and Abrams 1988, 48–50; Haslam 2004, 18–19. In the first experiment schoolboys between the ages 14 to 15 were asked to estimate the number of dots on a screen that was shown to them. After completing the task, the subjects were told that they had been assigned to different groups according to their answers. Two groups were told that some people consistently underestimate and others overestimate the number of dots, but this does not relate to the accuracy of judgements. The subjects were led to believe that this was the criterion of division between the groups of overestimators (OE) and underestimators (UE). Another two groups were told that some are consistently more accurate than others, and they were divided into groups of better (BA) and worse accuracy (WA). In reality the division was random for each of the four groups. The division between the neutral (OE and UE) and value (BA and WA) groups was designed to demonstrate the more pronounced discrimination of the outgroup in the value condition than in the neutral condition.

After assigning the subjects to one of the groups, they were asked to award points that signified a small amount of money to anonymous members of both groups. The money was never assigned to themselves in order to rule out economic self-interest. The subjects did not know who the members of either group were. There was no interaction between the individuals in the ingroup or in the outgroup or between the groups. The subjects knew only the code number and the group membership of the individual to whom they were rewarding the points. This arrangement created minimal conditions where usual factors associated with intergroup discrimination (history of conflict, interdependence) were excluded. (Tajfel et al. 1971, 153–155). Tajfel and Turner 1979, 38–39 later described the experimental situation as one in which “there is neither conflict of interest nor previously existing hostility between the ‘groups’. No social interaction takes place between the subjects, nor is there any rational link between economic self-interest and the strategy of in-group favouritism.”

The allocation of points was done through a prepared booklet containing one matrix on each page. Each page had a reminder of the subjects own group. The matrices were designed to create a competition between favouring ingroup against the outgroup and maximum benefit for both groups. In one part of the experiment the subjects had to allocate points to one member of their own group and one member of the other group. An example of the matrices is provided below. The extremes of the matrix reward maximum joint profit and intergroup discrimination. The middle terms provide maximum fairness (F). This experiment was designed to test the effects of social categorization on intergroup behaviour. (Tajfel et al. 1971, 157–158, including complete matrices of the experiment.)

Matrix 6 17 14 11 8 5 2 -1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8
 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 2 5 8 11 14 17

The study produced consistent results in all four groups. The mean scores demonstrated a significant shift in favour of the subjects’ own group. Also the number of subjects who showed ingroup favouritism was highly significant. The subjects’ deviation from a strategy of fairness to ingroup favouritism demonstrated the existence of outgroup discrimination even in the minimal conditions. The study demonstrated that social categorization alone could create discrimination of the outgroup in favour of the ingroup. The experiment, however, did not confirm the predicted difference between value and neutral conditions. Both groups displayed similar discrimination of the outgroup. (Tajfel et al. 1971 162–163; Haslam 2004, 18.) For a complete analysis of the statistic of the experiment see Tajfel et al. 1971, 159–162.

¹⁶⁴ The result of the first experiment led to the design of a second study with a more precise focus. In the second study boys of same age were told they were divided into two groups according to their preference between abstract painters Klee and Kandinsky. Again the actual division was random and conditions of the experiment were similar to the first one. The significant difference to the first experiment was that the subjects were given a booklet with a set of different matrices. The table below is an example of the typical matrices the available to the subjects.

7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
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of their behaviour on the objective gain of the ingroup. Therefore, under certain conditions, social categorization isolated from other variables can lead to intergroup behaviour that favours the in-group and discriminates against the out-group.¹⁶⁵ The conclusion from these minimal group experiments was that categorization per se is a sufficient reason for intergroup discrimination.¹⁶⁶

Social identity theory

The minimal group paradigm had a fundamental question built into its core. Why does mere categorization of people into distinct groups lead to intergroup discrimination? Tajfel explained that when the subjects categorized themselves as members of the given group this influenced their sense of identity. Social categorization as a member of a group gave the individual a motivation to establish a distinctive and positive social identity. This identity gave their behaviour meaning and guided their actions in an otherwise empty situation. The empirical results of the minimal group experiments led to the formulation of the concept of social identity, which Tajfel defined as “the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social

1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	25
MD				F				MIP				MJP

The participants could choose between strategies of fairness (F), maximum joint profit (MJP), maximum ingroup profit (MIP) and maximum difference (MD). The MD was in conflict with MIP and MJP in the example given above. (Tajfel et al. 1971, 163–166) with full examples of the matrices and strategies available to the subjects. The second experiment included also a repetition of the first experiment that validated its results (Tajfel et al. 1971, 170–171).

This second study repeated the result of departure from the strategy of fairness. The subjects preferred to award more points to their ingroup (MD) regardless of whether it resulted in the gain or loss of the maximum common good (MJP). The subjects even sacrificed the maximum objective gain of the ingroup (MIP) to achieve maximum differentiation (MD) between the groups. The effect of MD was observed to be more important to the subjects than the combined effect of MJP and MIP together. (Tajfel et al. 1971, 167–169; Hogg and Abrams 1988, 48–50; Haslam 2004, 18–19.) The validity of the results was supported by a pilot study that produced similar results (Tajfel 1971, 171–172). The results of the minimal group experiments were summarized as follows: The main finding, confirmed in all three experiments, is clear; in a situation devoid of the usual trappings of ingroup membership and of all the vagaries of interacting with an outgroup, the Ss still act in terms of their ingroup membership and of an intergroup categorization. Their actions are unambiguously directed at favouring the members of their ingroup as against the members of the outgroup. This happens despite the fact that an alternative strategy – acting in terms of the greatest common good – is clearly open to them at a relatively small cost of advantages that would accrue to members of the ingroup.” (Tajfel et al. 1971, 172.)

¹⁶⁵ See Tajfel et al. 1971, 151.
¹⁶⁶ Hogg and Abrams 1988, 53; Haslam 2004, 19. The minimal group paradigm has produced consistent results in various subsequent experiments and similar findings have been made in studying actual social situations. See Turner et al. 1987, 26–27; Haslam 2004, 19–22.

groups together with some emotional and value significant to him of this group membership”.¹⁶⁷ In the minimal group experiments subjects engaged in a social competition on the only dimension available to them. By favouring the members of the ingroup, participants created a positive distinctiveness for their own group. In other words, the minimal group experiment demonstrated the importance of social competition between groups that is not dependent on the objective competition of limited resources.¹⁶⁸

Tajfel and Turner formulated together a clearly defined version of the social identity theory to explain the results of the minimal group experiments. The social identity theory incorporates both the cognitive and motivational aspects of intergroup behaviour. Tajfel and Turner argued that when an individual defines himself as member of a social group that categorization leads him to strive for a positive distinctiveness for the ingroup in comparison to the outgroup.¹⁶⁹

The foundation of in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination lies in the cognitive processes of the human mind that enable people in other respects to function more effectively in the world. According to the social identity approach, categorization and self-enhancement are the two fundamental cognitive processes in the formation of social identity. Categorization is a cognitive process that simplifies perception. The function of categorization is to organize the infinite reality of stimuli into a comprehensible set of categories. Without processing innumerable individual objects into more manageable categories, people would not be able to act at all. An important aspect of the categorization is the *accentuation principle*. Categorization produces an accentuated perception of the similarity of objects within the same category and a heightened difference between objects in different categories.

In experiments on the effect of classification on the judgement of physical dimension, subjects were asked to estimate the length of lines. When four shorter lines were categorized ‘A’ and four longer ones ‘B’, the subjects

¹⁶⁷ Tajfel 1972, 32; See Haslam 2004, 21. Tajfel 1978, 63 presented a slightly revised definition of social identity concept as “that part of an individual’s sense self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.”

¹⁶⁸ Hogg and Abrams 1988, 49–50; Haslam 2004, 21.

¹⁶⁹ Tajfel and Turner 1979, 40–41; Haslam 2004, 21.

exaggerated significantly the similarity of the lines in the same category and the difference between the categories. No accentuation occurred when categorization was unrelated to the line length. Several experiments have demonstrated that accentuation also affects the perception of social stimuli. Categorization produces stereotypical perceptions where all members of the social group are perceived to share characteristics. There is, however, a fundamental difference in categorizing physical and social stimuli. The length of lines drawn on paper or similar categorizations into groups of 'A' and 'B' are fairly indifferent matters to the subjects personally. The situation is very different concerning social categories that can and do have an important personal significance to people. People categorize themselves as in-group or out-group members of different social groups. The social categorization occurs in reference to the self that has a profound impact on the value and emotional side of social identity. The personal importance of categorization has an effect on the level of the accentuation. The accentuation tends to be enhanced when the particular categorization has more relevance to the subject and this can lead to more extreme forms of prejudice.¹⁷⁰

The social identity approach presumes an underlying individual motivation for self-esteem. It states that a general tendency exists to evaluate positively the stereotypic characteristics of the in-group. The members of the in-group strive to ensure what Hoff and Abrams call "a relatively positive social identity in comparison to the out-group. The individual defines himself in terms of the in-group and the positive distinctiveness of the group enhances his self-esteem."¹⁷¹ Together, categorization and social comparison create group behaviour that includes various forms of intergroup discrimination. The universal psychological processes of simplification and evaluation enable people to overcome the overwhelming amount of stimulation. Categorization creates through the accentuation of intergroup differences a perception of in-group and out-group. Social comparison leads to selecting self-enhancing categories that enable the formation of a positive social identity.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Tajfel 1981, 77–78; Hogg and Abrams 1988, 17–21.

¹⁷¹ Hogg and Abrams 1988, 22–23.

¹⁷² Hogg and Abrams 1988, 17, 23.

Self-categorization theory

The social identity theory was developed specifically to explain intergroup discrimination. The empirical finding of the minimal group experiments was that *when* individuals categorize themselves as members of a group, it is a sufficient reason for intergroup discrimination. The social identity theory explains this phenomenon in terms of the individual desire to seek a positively distinctive social identity. The social identity theory, however, does not address the question how people come to define themselves as a member of a group in the first place. The theory presumed that the individual's definition fluctuates on a personal-social identity continuum, but it did not offer an analysis of the cognitive processes that are involved in the social identity becoming salient. The self-categorization theory focuses more on group formation in general and attempts to answer the above-mentioned questions that were left open in the social identity theory.¹⁷³

The self-categorization theory argues that individuals categorize themselves and some other individuals in the same social group, which is in contrast to other individuals categorized in another group.¹⁷⁴ Categorization of the self is seen as the cause of group phenomena rather than as a reflection of group affiliations.¹⁷⁵ When individuals categorize themselves as members of a group, they depersonalize themselves on a relevant dimension that defines the in-group. Depersonalization is a cognitive process that produces a stereotypical conception of the self as similar to or interchangeable with any other member of the in-group. Depersonalization is the basic psychological process that enables group formation and behaviour.¹⁷⁶

People self-categorize themselves at different levels of abstraction that form a hierarchical system of classification. In this system the lower level of abstraction is always included in the higher level(s) of abstraction. On the highest level the self is categorized as a human being and this human or superordinate level naturally includes all other categories. At the other extreme, on the personal or subordinate level of abstraction self-

¹⁷³ Turner et al. 1987, 42–43; Haslam 2004, 28–29.

¹⁷⁴ Turner et al. 1987, 44.

¹⁷⁵ Oakes, Haslam, Turner 1994, 93.

¹⁷⁶ Turner et al. 1987, 50–51; Haslam 2004, 30.

categorizations are made between individuals of the same in-group. The intermediate or social level of categorization encompasses the various social groups and distinctions between in- and out-groups that are made on this intergroup level.¹⁷⁷

The level of self-categorization that becomes salient varies according to the situation, but it follows the principle of meta-contrast. The salience is partly determined by comparisons at a higher level of abstraction. Haslam writes, “This means that, within a frame of reference comprised of salient stimuli, any given collection of stimuli will be perceived as a categorical entity to the extent that their difference from each other is seen to be less than the difference between them and all other stimuli.”¹⁷⁸ In other words, the comparison between different groups at a lower level of abstraction is dependent upon a categorization of them as in the same or similar group at a higher level of abstraction. At the same time, comparison of differences implies similarity.¹⁷⁹

Once self-categorization is salient on a social level of abstraction, it produces an accentuated perception of intra-group similarities and intra-group differences as predicted by the social identity theory. The similarities between the groups on a higher level of abstraction are downplayed to accentuate the differences on the lower-level abstraction, where comparison between the groups is made. The individual’s preference for the positive distinctiveness of the in-group results in seeking comparisons that favour the in-group and often produces intergroup discrimination and social stereotypes.¹⁸⁰

The role of social historical factors in the social identity approach

As Turner argues, the social identity approach recognizes, or more precisely emphasizes that “the functioning of social identity processes always takes place in a social context and is shaped by social structural realities”.¹⁸¹ Social

¹⁷⁷ Turner et al. 1987, 45–46; Oakes, Haslam, Turner 1994, 95.

¹⁷⁸ Haslam 2004, 31.

¹⁷⁹ Turner et al. 1987, 46–48.

¹⁸⁰ Turner et al. 1987, 49; Oakes, Haslam, Turner 1994, 99–100.

¹⁸¹ Turner 2004, xvii–xviii.

identity does not exist in a vacuum. The social structure, social context and society at large fundamentally shape the experience of social identity.¹⁸² According to Tajfel, the task of explaining the origin and development of the content assigned to various social groups is a problem for the social historian.¹⁸³ Haslam points out that minimal group experiments are misinterpreted, if they are taken as proof that discrimination occurs automatically or universally. In-group favouritism is, according to him, “a reaction to particular social psychological circumstances” and will vary according to the situation.¹⁸⁴

The minimal group paradigm purposely created experimental conditions where social factors did not play a part in the categorization and social comparison, but the conditions created for the study do not exist in social reality. In the real world there are conflicts of interest and previously existing hostilities that have an effect on the interaction between groups. Socio-historical factors have an essential influence on the intergroup behaviour and they need to be taken into consideration when analysing such behaviour. Categorization and social comparison are considered psychological processes that provide the parameters for the understanding of the socio-historical factors.¹⁸⁵ Psychological processes are universal cognitive structures of the human mind, but knowledge of the particular historical realities of the intergroup relations under examination is equally important for their proper understanding.

When social scientific theories and approaches are applied to the study of ancient sources, it needs to be recognized how exactly they explain society’s influence on individuals and how individuals can influence society. On the one hand, social structures have a profound impact on how people think and act. People often follow and take for granted social patterns that appear as self-evident. On the other hand, social reality, unlike physical reality, does not exist independently of human actions. It is reconstructed every moment by individual human beings and “societies are always in the

¹⁸² Turner 2004, xix.

¹⁸³ Tajfel 1969, 86.

¹⁸⁴ Haslam 2004, 21. This has also been shown in experiments where in-group favouritism does not occur and in some cases even out-group favouritism can be observed. See Turner et al. 1987, 30; Oakes, Haslam & Turner 1994, 83–84.

¹⁸⁵ Hogg and Abrams 1988, 54.

process of structuration.”¹⁸⁶ There is a dialectical relationship between society and the individual: human activities are structured by the social world around them and their activities structure that social world.¹⁸⁷

The social identity approach belongs to the interactionist perspective.¹⁸⁸ Individual cognition and the social context are seen in an interdependent relationship. Individual cognitive processes are fundamental to the group formation, but at the same time, individuals see themselves as members of a group that has a profound impact on their behaviour.¹⁸⁹ The social identity approach shares the conception that people are socially constructed, and individuals pattern society into social groups.¹⁹⁰ Social groups are not only external phenomena of the social world that the individual encounters, they are also internalized concepts that affect personal cognition and behaviour.¹⁹¹ These groups have an objective existence to the members of the different groups and the perception of belonging to one of these groups profoundly influences the behaviour and experiences of its members.¹⁹²

The underlying assumption in the social identity approach is, as Hogg and Abrams put it, that “society comprises of social categories which stand in power and status relations to one another.”¹⁹³ Social psychological processes and social structures stand in an interactionist relationship that is similar to the one between individual(s) and group(s). Social groups are a product of the psychological processes of individuals and social structures shape the psychological processes.¹⁹⁴ The social identity approach studies the mental processes and structures that mediate the dialectical relationship between society and individuals.¹⁹⁵ In this way, the dialectical relationship between groups and individuals lies at the core of the social identity approach.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁶ Giddens 2009, 90.

¹⁸⁷ Giddens 2009, 6, 9, 89–90. See Giddens 1984, 25–28.

¹⁸⁸ Turner et al. 1987, 17; Hogg & McGarty 1990, 23–24; Oakes, Haslam and Turner 1994, 94; Haslam 2004, 38.

¹⁸⁹ Turner 2004, xvi.

¹⁹⁰ Hogg and Abrams 1988, 1.

¹⁹¹ Haslam 2004, 14, 17.

¹⁹² Hogg and Abrams 1988, 2.

¹⁹³ Hogg and Abrams 1988, 14; see also pp. 18 and 26.

¹⁹⁴ Turner 2004, xvi–xvii.

¹⁹⁵ Hogg and Abrams 1988, 9, 26.

¹⁹⁶ Hogg and Abrams 1988, 14.

An important aspect in applying social scientific insights to early Christian sources is to understand the dual role of empirical evidence in social scientific studies. Social scientific studies are based on factual research that demonstrates how social phenomena occur and aims to formulate theories that explain why the observed phenomena occur. The theories are constructed abstract interpretations that are created to explain the empirical evidence. In this manner, theories serve the purpose of making sense of the various facts of social life, and hence empirical research and constructed theories exist in an interconnected relationship. The validity of theoretical explanations is subsequently tested in turn by factual research.¹⁹⁷

Applying a particular social scientific theory to explain early Christianity requires that a scholar possesses empirical evidence to which the theory is applied. The empirical evidence that social scientific theories seek to explain is the interaction between the society and the individual. In the study of early Christian sources, this means analysing how the social reality has influenced the individual author and how the individual author influences social reality. The written sources do not directly provide such empirical evidence. Society's influence on the author and the author's influence on society are deduced from the analysed text(s). The empirical material to which the social scientific theories should be applied is the interaction between the individual and social reality.

Applying the social identity approach to an ancient source material requires an analysis of the interaction between the individual author and society, which has to be reconstructed through the text. It is important to note that the social identity approach is not directed towards the text itself. After all, texts do not have a social identity. They may or may not reflect the social identity of the author or his community. A social psychological explanation of the behaviour of the Christian author requires knowledge of that behaviour and the surrounding society to which it is connected. The way a scholar reconstructs the author's composition of the text and the social reality behind the text irreversibly affects the application of a social scientific method. The application of such a method, therefore, cannot replace historical

¹⁹⁷ Giddens 2009, 10–11, 40.

methodology, but rather builds upon and presupposes a historical analysis of the sources, a point also made by social identity theorist Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams:

[T]he social identity approach simply states that social groups are inevitable, because they are functional – they fulfil individual and societal needs for order, structure, simplification, predictability, and so forth. All the rest *must* incorporate an historical analysis. It is not possible to predict or explain content or culture by recourse to psychological processes alone. Psychological processes ensure that groups are inevitable, but do not directly govern what types of groups they are, what characteristics they have, or how they relate to other groups.¹⁹⁸

When social scientific methods are used to study an earlier historical period, scholars have to rely on written documents. In the study of secondary sources, they encounter the same problems of authenticity, reliability and partiality as historians. As Giddens points out, historical analysis of social scientific questions “requires a patient, systematic approach to sources and their interpretation.”¹⁹⁹ The application of these methods to the early Christian sources is not a simple and straightforward procedure. Luomanen writes, “[T]he material available does not easily lend itself to purely sociological analysis. There is a host of questions connected to the analysis of (often historically layered) ancient texts that also have to be sorted out before it is possible to present views about the social setting of people who authored these documents.”²⁰⁰ The texts may contain information from various social contexts and these contexts need to be analysed before it is possible to proceed with the social scientific study of the material. Traditional historical critical methods provide methods and information for reconstructing the social reality in which the author is writing and how his writing is responding to that social reality. Social scientific theories can assist

¹⁹⁸ Hogg and Abrams 1988, 18. Italics original.

¹⁹⁹ Giddens 2009, 59.

²⁰⁰ Luomanen 2007, 225.

biblical scholars in analysing the dual structure that exists between the society and the individual, a dialectical relationship in which one affects the other.

Applying the social identity approach to explain the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter

The social identity approach provides an empirically tested social psychological theory to explain the discrimination against the Jews by the author of the Gospel of Peter. Social identity is always constructed in contrast to others. The self-categorization theory provides analytical tools to examine why Christian identity was constructed in contrast with Judaism. In the social world of the second century, the Jews were both socially and ideologically the closest out-group to Christians. They were categorized as similar on a higher level of abstraction (monotheism, Scriptures), but on a lower level of abstraction the Christians identified themselves as different from their Jewish neighbours. The social identity theory explains how the categorization produces distinctiveness by accentuating differences between the social groups and accentuating similarities within them on the relevant dimension of comparison. This led to the formation of distinctive social categories with stereotypical characteristics attached to them. The motivation aspect of the social identity theory presumes that the comparison tends to favour the ingroup. Together the accentuated categorization and self-enhancement produces positive distinctiveness. Part of the process is negative stereotypical concepts of the compared outgroup that enhances the positive distinctiveness of the ingroup. A more detailed historical critical analysis of the social context and interaction between members of Jewish and Christian communities clarifies the content and development of the anti-Jewish social stereotype in the Christian tradition. Applying the social identity approach to the historical information provided by the Gospel of Peter will enhance our understanding of the formation of Christian anti-Judaism.

Parting of the ways, the Gospel of Peter, and the social identity approach

The discussion of the relationship between Christians and Jews does not mean that there was not significant diversity in second century Christianity or Judaism. The repeated and intense disputes between members of the same faith are reflected in several sources from this period. They undisputedly demonstrate the diversity of both religions. These conflicts between different groups, however, belong to another level of abstraction. The different Christian or Jewish groups belonged in one context to the same group on a higher level of abstraction. In another context they belonged to different groups on a lower level of abstraction. These considerations have an effect on the question whether we should speak of Christianity and Judaism or Christianities and Judaisms. The social identity approach does not provide a direct answer to the debate. It only provides analytical tools to examine the similarity and differences of various factions.

One of the leading scholars who has challenged the parting of the ways paradigm is Daniel Boyarin. Boyarin acknowledges the difficulty in precisely defining Christianity and Judaism, and the exact moment of Parting on the ways.²⁰¹ A distinctive argument in Boyarin's thesis lies in their understanding of the term Judaism. Boyarin argues that scholars should not refer to diverse Judaism, but to many Judaisms. Boyarin refers to the fact that "Judaism – an anachronism – was up for grabs as well, by which I don't mean only the by-now well-accepted notion that there was no normative Judaism, only Judaisms".²⁰² The interpretation of the diverse nature of Christianity and Judaism is crucial to an understanding of the relationship between them. The use of the terms Judaism(s) and Christianity/Christianities also has significance in understanding the identity of both groups.

The term Judaism is not anachronistic in the literal sense, because it appears both in ancient Jewish and in Christian texts. Boyarin draws attention to the fact that this term is exceedingly rare in Jewish texts. "When the term *Ioudaismos* appears in non-Christian – to my knowledge only

²⁰¹ Boyarin 2004, 6.

²⁰² Boyarin 2004, xi, 10.

in 2 Maccabees – it doesn't mean Judaism the religion but the entire complex of loyalties and practices mark of the people of Israel".²⁰³ The term also appears in 4. Macc. 4:26,²⁰⁴ but is nevertheless very rare and does not seem to reflect the way Jewish people usually understood their beliefs and practices. In Christian texts the term Judaism appears for the first time in Gal. 1:13.²⁰⁵ It is reasonable to ask why Paul used this term and how his readers would have understood it if it was not widely used. The term Judaism is older than Christianity and the formulation of the latter seems to have been influenced by the former. These terms are found together for the first in Ignatius's letter (Ign. Phil. 6:1).²⁰⁶

The reference above demonstrates that Boyarin is aware of the use of the term 'Judaism' in Christian and Jewish sources. His primary emphasis is that the term is anachronistic in terms of its content. One of the problems of the term Judaism is its narrow meaning as a religion. This criticism is justified, but the use of the plural form, *Judaisms*, does not solve this problem. If we use this form, is it not equally possible to misinterpret the different *Judaisms* narrowly as religions? Moreover, the term *Judaism* does appear in several Christian sources and in two Jewish sources. The plural form is not attested in ancient sources and it is anachronistic at least on the terminological level. If we want emphasis the diversity of Judaism, what prevents us from using *Judaism* as higher level of abstraction, which includes within it the diverse groups of Jews? *Judaism*, like any other widespread and diverse social phenomenon, is by necessity an abstraction, which does not exist in a uniform manner as such. If *Judaism* is understood as a diverse phenomenon and not narrowly as a religion, and it is not defined within the framework that was formulated by Christianity, is it not preferable to use the term *Judaism*?

There is also a linguistic element in the ancient use of the term *Judaism*. Lieu notes that the term is a creation of the Hellenistic Jews.²⁰⁷ There is no similar word in Hebrew. Excluding the two references in Second

²⁰³ Boyarin 2004, 23.

²⁰⁴ Lieu 1996, 85.

²⁰⁵ Lieu 1996, 30.

²⁰⁶ Lieu 1996, 31.

²⁰⁷ Lieu 1996, 30.

and Fourth Maccabees, the Jews used to refer to themselves as 'Israel' or 'the people'.²⁰⁸ However, Israel and the people refer primarily to individual Jews and their communities. This allows a discussion of the relationship between Christians and Jews, but leaves open the question of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Boyarin argues that Judaism should not be understood only as a religion, although Judaism does not exclude religious elements: "Judaism' both is and is not a 'religion.'" ²⁰⁹ Boyarin argues that Christianity is a religion, but Judaism is "the entire complex of loyalties and practices mark off the people of Israel".²¹⁰ If Christianity and Judaism are not religions, but are different categories,²¹¹ is it not necessary to conclude that their ways had parted? In other words, Boyarin argues that on the one hand Christianity and Judaism had not parted, but on the other hand they are such different phenomena that comparing them is problematic. Regardless of how Judaism is defined as a religion or how it can be compared to Christianity as a religion, both Christianity and Judaism are social constructions and hence we can compare the relationship between different Christian and Jewish groups.²¹²

In the following I will examine the use of the terms Judaism/Judaisms and Christianity/Christianities in the light of the social identity approach. The fundamental question in this examination is whether we should use this approach to analyse the difference between Christianity and Judaism or Christians and Jews. Boyarin, for example, reflects on how Christianity was searching for its identity.²¹³ However, Christianity or Judaism does not have a social identity, only Christians and Jews have a social identity. The question of the parting of the ways undoubtedly concerns the identity of Christians and Jews, but in the light of the social identity approach it seems appropriate to use the concept of identity to examine the relationship between Christians and Jews and not the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Christian and Jewish identity are expressions of the fact that members of the community identified themselves as Christians or Jews. The

²⁰⁸ Lieu 1996, 215.

²⁰⁹ Boyarin 2004, 8.

²¹⁰ Boyarin 2004, 23.

²¹¹ Boyarin 2004, 13.

²¹² Boyarin 2004, 19.

²¹³ Boyarin 2004, xi.

content of these identities was constantly negotiated and reflected the changing social circumstances where identity was formed and upheld.

The scholarship of early Christianity and Judaism has reached a point where the diversity of both is widely accepted.²¹⁴ In other words, the social identity approach and ancient sources agree that Christianity or Judaism were not precisely defined in antiquity and it is therefore impossible to define a precise moment for the parting of the ways. It is reasonable to argue that the parting of the ways occurred in the first or the fourth century. Moreover, it is methodologically questionable to examine the relationship between Christianity and Judaism with a social identity approach, because it examines the behaviour of individuals as members of a group. Therefore, it seems reasonable to use this approach to examine the relationship between Christians and Jews.

Boyarin also considers that the question of the parting of the ways should be examined as a relationship between Christians and Jews: “[W]hether or not there were Christianity and Judaism, there were, it seems, at least some Christians who were not Jews, and, of course, many Jews who were not Christians, and the distinctions of identity/identification would, ultimately, make a difference.”²¹⁵ However, Boyarin quickly abandons this line of thought. He argues that there was no absolute theological point or ideological definition that could be used to create a distinction between Christianity and Judaism.²¹⁶ In other words, Boyarin examines the question of the parting of the ways only as an ideological and theological question. My argument is that the parting of the ways should be examined as a question of defining the social identity of Christians and Jews. Regardless of whether this question is examined on a social or ideological level, it would clarify the discussion if there were a more precise definition to determine whether we are dealing with the parting of the ways of Christianity and Judaism or Christians and Jews. The notion seems to be used interchangeably and the concept of identity is applied to both without specific considerations.

²¹⁴ See Boyarin 2004, 6.

²¹⁵ Boyarin 2004, 7.

²¹⁶ Boyarin 2004, 6–7.

The parting of the ways between Christians and Jews seems to precede the parting of the ways between Christianity and Judaism. Boyarin shares a similar approach to the question. “One might say that Judaism and Christianity were invented in order to explain the fact that there were Jews and Christians.”²¹⁷ Is it too bold an interpretation to claim that Christians and Jews had parted ways before Christianity and Judaism were created to explain, define and amplify the existing parting of the ways? Boyarin repeatedly emphasizes that the ancient sources depict how their authors attempted to define the border between Christianity and Judaism.²¹⁸ This emphasis reflects Boyarin’s interpretation that the parting of the ways was not internalized, but was instead something that needed to be created.²¹⁹

The social identity approach indicates that it is more probable that a separate identity was internalized in both communities. This does not imply that there were not individuals in Christian and Jewish communities that attempted to define the borders and identity of the community. A significant portion of early Christian and Jewish literature reflects – at least to a certain extent – the efforts of leading members of the community to define the acceptable practices and beliefs of the community. However, it is reasonable to presume that the members of the community were inclined to accept the attempts to define the identity of the community. The social identity approach is built upon the study of human cognitive behaviour. The social identity approach explains that individuals attempt to create clear categories, including social categories like we – they, and to interpret their own group in a relatively positive light. The content of the social identity is constantly evolving, but there is clear empirical evidence that individuals attempt to create some kind of social identity regardless of the situation. This is exemplified by artificial experiments where individuals create a social identity for themselves and favour the members of their own group although they do not even know the members of their group. Boyarin’s emphasis on the non-existent border between Christians and Jews in the social reality of antiquity is unlikely in the light of the social identity approach. The social

²¹⁷ Boyarin 2004, 23.

²¹⁸ Boyarin 2004, 27, 37.

²¹⁹ Boyarin 2004, 26.

reality of the first centuries was diverse, but Christian and Jewish communities would have been rather unique if their members did not have a tendency to form an identity of who they were and who they were not. In my opinion the ancient sources, including the Gospel of Peter, mostly depict the attempts of groups to redefine their social identity in changing circumstances into members of the community who had internalized the social identity of the group.

Nicklas has recently problematized the concept of parting of the ways. He questions attempts to define an early date and specific moment when Christianity and Judaism separated. He proposes that a more dynamic and differentiated model is necessary to explain the relationship between Christians and Jews in the first centuries. Nicklas argues that a discussion of Jews and Christians presupposes that there were two clearly defined groups that could easily be distinguished from each other. In reality these groups were much more diverse, flexible and lacked clearly defined borders. Nicklas argues that it is problematic to categorize these groups as Jews and Christians. The definitions of Christianity and Judaism were very different in different contexts and lines are drawn by particular individuals and groups.²²⁰ This is emphasized by the few cases where relationships were friendly between Christians and Jews, and this drew criticisms from Christian leaders who wanted to enforce more strict boundaries between the communities.²²¹

There were different groups within Christianity that had both unity and diversity between them in various aspects of practice and belief. It is logical that the relationships between different Christian and Jewish groups were also diverse in different locations and times. We cannot presume a uniform Christianity and Judaism, or a parting of the ways model that explains their relationship. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the particular circumstances of the social reality behind the Gospel of Peter and how the relationship between Christians and Jews in those circumstances affected the author's depiction of the Jews. A problem with Nicklas's analysis is that he questions the categorization of Christians and Jews as something that modern

²²⁰ Nicklas 2018, 1–4, 8, 11

²²¹ Nicklas 2018, 6–8, 10–11. It is probable that friendly or cordial relationships between were much more common than the preserved sources imply. Disputes and polemics are probably vastly overrepresented in the sources.

scholars assign to ancient reality. However, categorization and self-categorization of individuals as Christians and Jews is not only superimposed upon ancient reality, it is also very much a part of ancient discourse. Ancient social reality was complex and various author's simplified this complex social reality to clearly defined groups. There are, in fact, two separate questions that both need to be addressed: what was the complex social reality like and how was that complex social reality reduced to more simple categories like Christians and Jews? I have argued above that if we want to explain why Christians created a social category of the Jews as murderers of Jesus, we need to explain the existing social reality and the author's attempts to create social reality. The social identity approach recognizes that different social identities become salient in different circumstances. In the Gospel of Peter the social identity of Christians and Jews is salient and the discussions and disputes within Christianity and Judaism are absent. The author of the Gospel of Peter is engaged in drawing the line between Christians and Jews.²²²

In this study I examine why Christians formulated the accusation that Jews murdered Christ. The accusation itself requires that all Jews are categorized as members of the same group. There were many Jewish and Christian groups in the second century. The social reality and the relationship between them was undoubtedly diverse. If there were various groups of Christians and Jews who interacted differently with each other in different contexts, the Gospel of Peter should be examined as an individual witness to a diverse relationship between Christians and Jews, not within a larger framework of Jewish-Christian relations. Therefore, I examine the social context of the Gospel of Peter and the interaction between Jews and

²²² This interpretation is reflected also in the recent monographs on the Gospel of Peter (Foster 2010, Henderson 2011, Augustin 2014). All three monographs use terms Jews/Judaism and Christians/Christianity without any reference to models or descriptions of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. There are numerous examples of this approach, but I will cite one from Augustin. "Die starke emotionale Beteiligung, mit der der pseudo-petrinische Erzähler von der Angst der Jünger vor den Juden berichtet, und die Darstellung der Verfolgung als sehr bedrohlich und akut indizieren, dass das EvPetr wahrscheinlich im unmittelbaren Kontext eines Konflikts zwischen Christen und Juden verfasst wurde." (Augustin 2014, 325) Augustin mentions the diversity of Christianity and Judaism only in footnotes. (Augustin 2014, 294 n. 9–11).

Christians that influenced the author of the Gospel of Peter. My study ultimately examines how the author creates social reality. I use simple categories of Jews and Christians, because the author of the Gospel of Peter presents a similar dichotomy and I try to explain why the author made the claim that all Jews are the murderers of the Lord. A simplification of diverse social reality is necessary to uphold this claim. An important part of my study is analysing the distinction between the existing social reality and the author creating social reality.

Rhetorical criticism

The social identity approach explains why members of different social groups denigrate each other. However, the Gospel of Peter does not only reflect the author's membership in the Christian community and its influence on his behaviour, it also reflects the author's efforts to influence members of the community to embrace his message. This inevitably leads to the examination of the rhetoric that the author used to persuade his audience. A rhetorical critical analysis can answer the questions how the author of the Gospel of Peter attempts to influence the audience to accept his message, and in turn to modify their beliefs and practices.

The preserved fragment of the Gospel of Peter is a religious narrative of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Like many other narratives, it contains diverse rhetorical elements and they can be analysed through rhetorical criticism. The author had a clear religious message to convey to his audience. He composed his narrative in a way that is designed to convince the audience of the truthfulness of the message and the reliability of its witnesses. The author uses various rhetorical techniques to reach this goal. In this sense the gospel narrative is rhetorical in nature. Thus, the Gospel of Peter can be approached as a persuasive text full of rhetorical practices.²²³

The goal of rhetorical analysis is to discover "the author's intent and how that is transmitted through a text to an audience".²²⁴ In a rhetorical analysis a text is examined in order to understand how the author is

²²³ See Kennedy 1984, 101; Hietanen 2011, 63–64, 67–69.

²²⁴ Kennedy 1984, 12.

attempting to influence his audience.²²⁵ The text and its details are examined in order to discover the particular intention of the author who is addressing a particular audience at a certain moment.²²⁶ When rhetorical categories are used to interpret a text, the factors that influenced the author should be examined.²²⁷ These include the circumstances and experiences of the author and the audience.²²⁸ as Freeman points out, “[r]hetoric is, inevitably, shaped by the context in which it is needed.”²²⁹ The author had to assess the situation of the audience in order to compose a suitable text to the particular circumstances. In biblical scholarship a rhetorical analysis of the text includes the intention of the author in the specific situation that is formed by the circumstances and problems of the audience.²³⁰

In the present study the rhetoric of the author of the Gospel of Peter is examined within the framework of the rhetorical situation. Lloyd F. Bitzer formulated the concept and theory of the rhetorical situation, his goal being to establish the rhetorical situation as a controlling and fundamental concern of rhetorical theory.²³¹ The rhetorical situation is the context in which a writer creates a rhetorical discourse. It provides a concept to analyse the characteristics and nature of those contexts, and it is used to examine how and why these contexts result in the creation of a rhetorical discourse.²³² Bitzer concludes: “The presence of rhetorical discourse obviously indicates the presence of a rhetorical situation... it is the situation which calls the discourse into existence.”²³³

The underlining assumption in Bitzer’s theory is that rhetoric is situational. Rhetorical discourse acquires its character from the circumstances of the historical context and is a response to the historical situation. The function of a rhetorical work is to produce a change in the world. Through rhetorical discourse the author influences the audience to alter their thought and action, which in turn leads to a change in the world. A particular

²²⁵ Classen 2000, 4.

²²⁶ Classen 2000, 46.

²²⁷ Classen 2000, 5.

²²⁸ Classen 2000, 17.

²²⁹ Freeman 2004, 296.

²³⁰ Classen 2000, 46–47.

²³¹ Bitzer 1968, 3.

²³² Bitzer 1968, 1.

²³³ Bitzer 1968, 2.

rhetorical discourse comes to existence because a particular situation demands such a verbal response. The verbal response participates with the demands imposed by the situation and is necessary for the completion of the action in the situation.²³⁴

Bitzer formally defined the rhetorical situation as “a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence, which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence.”²³⁵ Any rhetorical situation has three constituents that exist before the creation of a discourse. The first is the exigence that invites the discourse. A rhetorical exigence is an undesirable situation that can be modified through discourse. The second constituent is the audience. Rhetorical discourse attempts to influence the audience to function as mediators of the change desired by the author. The rhetorical situation also consists of several constraints formed by persons, events, objects, and relation. These constraints include beliefs, sources, traditions and motives. They are part of the rhetorical situation because they have the ability to constrain the decision and action of the audience. The rhetorical situation is comprised of these three constituents.²³⁶

After the publication of Bitzer’s article on the rhetorical situation, it became a prominent but controversial rhetorical theory. Critics of Bitzer’s theory have predominantly focused on the description of objective elements in the rhetorical situation, the causal force of these objective elements, and the minimal role of the rhetor in the creation of a specific discourse.²³⁷

Arthur B. Miller argues, “the antecedent of every rhetorical situation is the exigence from which the situation derives its significance”.²³⁸ However, the exigence, an imperfection or a defect, does not exist in the

²³⁴ Bitzer 1968, 3–5. Bitzer compares the relationship between rhetorical discourse and rhetorical situation to that of a question and an answer or a problem and a solution. In each case the former comes into existence in response to the latter. The discourse is given rhetorical significance by the situation that must exist as a necessary condition, just as a question must exist as a necessary condition of an answer. The situation controls the rhetorical response like a question controls the answer or a problem controls the solution. (Bitzer 1968, 5–6)

²³⁵ Bitzer 1968, 6.

²³⁶ Bitzer 1968, 6–8.

²³⁷ Patton 1979, 36–37. Kennedy 1984, 34 cites Bitzer’s concept with approval. He notes that theoretical objections have been raised against it, but it has proved to be a practical tool for rhetorical criticism.

²³⁸ Miller 1972, 118.

situation, but in the mind of the perceiver and the perceived exigence is ultimately created by the perceiver. Therefore, the perceived exigence depends upon the constraints and perception of the perceiver. The exigence specifies the limits of the rhetor's response to the situation. The rhetor has creative latitude to formulate his response to the exigence within the limits specified by the exigence.²³⁹

Richard E. Vatz suggests a perspective to view the relationship between the rhetoric and the situation that is converse to Bitzer's position. Vatz argues that the situation does not control the rhetorical response.²⁴⁰ Rather, "the rhetoric controls the situational response".²⁴¹ Vatz criticizes Bitzer's description of exigence and traces it to his philosophy of meaning.²⁴² Vatz states, "Bitzer takes the position that meaning resides in the events" and "[t]here is an intrinsic nature in events from which rhetoric inexorably follows, or should follow."²⁴³ In reality there are an inexhaustible number of ambiguous facts and events. The communication includes a choice of the facts and events that are communicated:²⁴⁴ "The very choice of what facts or events are relevant is a pure arbitration."²⁴⁵ The chosen information becomes salient and it is interpreted in order to give it meaning.²⁴⁶ "Therefore, meaning is not discovered in situations, but created by rhetors".²⁴⁷ Ultimately, Vatz characterizes "rhetoric as a creation of reality and salience rather than a reflector of reality".²⁴⁸

Scott Consigny also focuses his criticism on the objective and publicly observable historical reality in Bitzer's theory and the claim that the rhetorical situation controls and determines the response. Consigny concludes, "[f]or Bitzer the rhetor's response is predetermined by the positive facts in the objective situation."²⁴⁹ Consigny considers that Bitzer and Vatz pose an antinomy where "either the rhetorical situation controls the acts of

²³⁹ Miller 1972, 111–112, 117.

²⁴⁰ Vatz 1973, 154, 158–159.

²⁴¹ Vatz 1973, 159.

²⁴² Vatz 1973, 155–156.

²⁴³ Vatz 1973, 155.

²⁴⁴ Vatz, 1973, 156, 158.

²⁴⁵ Vatz 1973, 157.

²⁴⁶ Vatz 1973, 157–158.

²⁴⁷ Vatz 1973, 175.

²⁴⁸ Vatz 1973, 158.

²⁴⁹ Consigny 1974, 175.

the rhetor or the rhetor freely creates the situation.”²⁵⁰ Cosigny rejects this antinomy and proposes a mediating position. Consigny agrees with Bitzer that the rhetorical situation involves constraints that the rhetor cannot ignore. However, Bitzer mistakenly characterizes the situation as determinate. Vatz, on the other had, correctly emphasizes the perception and creative role of the rhetor, but does not give proper attention to the constraints of the rhetorical situation.²⁵¹ Consigny argues that the rhetor encounters an indeterminate situation and must structure the exigence. The rhetor interacts with the situation and responds to it creatively. His response is restricted by the situation, but within the limits of the situation, he has freedom to choose how to structure his response.²⁵²

John H. Patton set out to clarify and elaborate Bitzer’s theory and to illuminate how rhetoric is related to the situation.²⁵³ Patton concedes, “the ambiguity of some of Bitzer’s original statements and his emphasis on the controlling function of situations, the types of objections cited above are partially understandable.”²⁵⁴ However, he argues that the critics have misinterpreted the objective and causal elements of the situational theory and neglected the role of the rhetor in Bitzer’s article. Bitzer does emphasize the controlling nature of the rhetorical situation and argues that rhetoric is grounded in distinct historical circumstances that are observable to the perceivers.²⁵⁵ However, Patton also argues that “the choices made by rhetors ultimately constitute the controlling exigence. Thus it seems clear that the choices rhetors make significantly influence both the form and content of their discourse.”²⁵⁶

The exigence is a result of the rhetor’s perception and rhetor’s decisions are significant in forming his response to the exigence. In the rhetorical situation the rhetor encounters various elements and generates the controlling exigence. The rhetor defines the situation and creates its meaning. Patton characterizes Bitzer’s description of the role of the rhetor as

²⁵⁰ Consigny 1974, 185.

²⁵¹ Consigny 1974, 175–176, 178.

²⁵² Consigny, 1974, 178–183.

²⁵³ Patton 1979, 36.

²⁵⁴ Patton 1979, 38. In his article Patton argues primarily against the criticism leveled by Vatz and Consigny.

²⁵⁵ Patton 1979, 38.

²⁵⁶ Patton 1979, 41.

undeveloped, but maintains that Bitzer upholds that the rhetor creates both the meaning and discourse. The rhetor's response participates in the situation.²⁵⁷ Patton maintains that rhetoric is essentially historical and the discourse is related to observable events and experiences. Rhetoric is responsive to the circumstances and the rhetor creatively participates in the situation: "The theory of meaning involved is clearly based upon interaction between the rhetor's perceptual capacities or inclinations and actual events and experiences – and in no way implies that meaning resides intrinsically in events."²⁵⁸

The constraints of the rhetorical situation include the beliefs and interest of the rhetor. The rhetor considers the constraints when he considers his response. Patton argues that the rhetor's perception of events and experiences is a necessary antecedent of a particular kind of rhetorical discourse. Patton concedes that Bitzer does not discuss the role of the perceiver in detail, but maintains that Bitzer mentions that the exigence and the constraints are perceived and the perceiver creates the rhetorical response. In situational theory the rhetor's perception of events and experiences influences the production of the rhetorical discourse. The perception of events and experiences are essential.²⁵⁹ However, "the historical condition of any situation must be included in any assessment of how and why rhetors define controlling exigences and formulate purposeful discourse".²⁶⁰ The definition of a controlling exigence is an act of creation, but it is grounded in the objective features of the situation.²⁶¹

Philip K. Tompkins criticizes Patton's elaborations as well as Bitzer's original theory. Tompkins notes that Patton "so significantly altered the original theory by his clarifications and elaborations that the theory now seems able to accommodate most of the criticism. For example, Patton added two elements (perception and creativity) originally called for as corrections by some of the critics."²⁶² The major concern for Tompkins is the fact that the exigence is located in reality. Although Tompkins states that Patton added

²⁵⁷ Patton 1979, 42–43.

²⁵⁸ Patton 1979, 45.

²⁵⁹ Patton 1979, 45–48.

²⁶⁰ Patton 1979, 47.

²⁶¹ Patton 1979, 49.

²⁶² Tompkins 1980, 86.

perception to the original theory, he nevertheless failed to elaborate that “reality is perceived by the rhetor.”²⁶³ Tompkins calls for a clarification of the changes that a discourse affects in reality. He asks whether this implies changes in reality or perceptions of reality.²⁶⁴ Tompkins offers “a new formulation of situational theory: *Rhetorical discourse shapes, and is shaped by, rhetorical situations; by imputing causal status either to discourse or situation, in whatever degree of force, one may be simply bracketing a sequence of events in an arbitrary manner.*”²⁶⁵

Bitzer modified and extended his views of the situational perspective in the light of the criticism of his original article. Bitzer examines “rhetoric as a functional, or pragmatic, communication and thus a critical mode of functional interaction in which the chief interacting grounds are persons on the one hand and the environment on the other. The decision to underscore the process of functional interaction and to regard persons and environment as interacting grounds tends to generate a view of rhetoric which may be called situational.”²⁶⁶ Bitzer explicitly states that the starting point in the situational perspective is that “human beings interact functionally with their environment.”²⁶⁷ The environment consists of a mix of physical and mental environment. Human life is constant adjustment to or modification of the environment. The mental environment is created by human beings themselves and comprised of ideas, beliefs and conventions.²⁶⁸ These mental constructions are part of the historical reality and are objective in the sense that the perceiver can observe them and their existence is independent of the perceiver.²⁶⁹ Bitzer affirms that an observer encounters an environment, which includes an innumerable amount of details. The observer recognizes something is other than it should be. This forms the exigence, which is a necessary condition of pragmatic interaction. The rhetor also recognizes a remedy or a modification to the exigence. The exigence requires a component of interest. The rhetor perceives factual conditions that are connected to his

²⁶³ Tompkins 1980, 85.

²⁶⁴ Tompkins 1980, 86.

²⁶⁵ Tompkins 1980, 87. Italics original.

²⁶⁶ Bitzer 1981, 21.

²⁶⁷ Bitzer 1981, 21.

²⁶⁸ Bitzer 1981, 21–22.

²⁶⁹ Bitzer 1981, 24–25, 28.

interests and creates a discourse in order to change some factual conditions. The rhetorical exigence consists of factual conditions and related interests,²⁷⁰ or as Bitzer puts it: “The rhetor’s central creative task is to discover and make use of proper constraints in his message in order that his response, in conjunction with other constraints operative in the situation, will influence the audience”.²⁷¹ Furthermore, “[t]he perspective does not deny the influence of the individual’s creativity in the apprehension of situations and in the efforts to modify them through creation and presentation of messages”.²⁷² “The process of pragmatic communication begins with the apprehension of situational constituents. The exigence is pivotal among these because human beings respond to situations in proportion to their perception of matters that are other than they should be.”²⁷³

It is not necessary to discuss how Bitzer’s position developed or changed at this instance. The crucial question is how the expanded role of the rhetor as the perceiver of the factual conditions and the creator of the exigence influences the concept of a rhetorical situation. A vital aspect seems to be a careful distinction between the historical situation and the rhetorical situation.²⁷⁴ The factual conditions form the historical situation. The historical situation does not invite or demand a rhetorical discourse. The rhetorical situation, however, calls a discourse into existence, because it includes the exigence. The exigence consists of the rhetor’s perception of the factual conditions and an interest in modifying the factual conditions. Therefore, a rhetorical situation invites or demands a creation of a rhetorical discourse, while a historical situation does not. The historical situation influences the rhetor’s discourse and the discourse influences the historical situation. Therefore, a discourse both reflects and creates social reality. The task of a scholar is to make distinctions how this interaction between the rhetor and the environment is present in the text. In this study I argue that a careful distinction between a historical situation and a rhetorical situation leads to a more profound understanding of both aspects of the Gospel of Peter.

²⁷⁰ Bitzer 1981, 23–24, 26, 28–29.

²⁷¹ Bitzer 1981, 23–24.

²⁷² Bitzer 1981, 25.

²⁷³ Bitzer 1981, 25.

²⁷⁴ Kennedy 1984, 34. Kennedy states that the rhetorical situation “roughly corresponds to the *Sitz im Leben* of form criticism.”

Furthermore, I also argue that many of the debates and conflicting interpretations of the historical situation behind the Gospel of Peter are a result of a confusion between the rhetorical and historical situations, and these can be resolved when a careful distinction is made between them.

The situational approach to the rhetoric of the Gospel of Peter requires that the constraints of the rhetorical situation are examined. This includes the examination of the sources, traditions and social experiences that influenced the author's composition of his gospel. In other words, the historical situation behind the Gospel of Peter is reconstructed as precisely as possible before the reconstruction of the rhetorical situation and an analysis of the author's rhetoric. Amador points out that the Christian gospels can be seen as rhetorical visions reflecting the social circumstances of the Christian community. New rhetorical visions arise as a result of social encounters and the rhetorical visions generate group identification.²⁷⁵

In this study I examine the rhetoric of the Gospel of Peter through the modern perspective of situational rhetoric. However, there is one important aspect of ancient rhetoric that needs to be taken into consideration. It is well known that the ancient Mediterranean culture was predominantly rhetorical in nature and the influence of rhetoric penetrated the whole society. Rhetoric was the most important subject of formal education. Regardless of the author's formal training in rhetoric, he would have been influenced by the omnipresent rhetorical culture of his time.²⁷⁶ Polemical rhetorical conventions were a particularly influential form of rhetoric in antiquity. Christians, Jews and pagans all participated in vituperation, the denigration of others.²⁷⁷ The primary purpose of this study is to explain the formation of Christian anti-Judaism, and the Gospel of Peter contains several anti-Jewish statements. An important question is how does the polemic in the Gospel of Peter compare to the conventions of ancient polemical rhetoric and how does this affect the reconstruction of the rhetorical situation. Hence, the anti-Jewish statements of the Gospel of Peter should be analysed in the light of the conventions of verbal polemic and the rhetoric should be interpreted within the cultural

²⁷⁵ Amador 1999, 202–203.

²⁷⁶ Kennedy 1984, 5; Hietanen 2011, 67–68.

²⁷⁷ Johnson 1989, 430–441. See also Setzer 1994, 131.

context of the time. The vituperation can be classified as a constraint, a tradition or a convention within the framework of the situational perspective.

The social identity approach and rhetorical criticism

I have above discussed the use of the social identity approach and rhetorical criticism in the study of the Gospel of Peter, but it is important to explicate how these two approaches relate to each other. The discussion above has indicated that there is a remarkable similarity between the categorization of people into groups with stereotypical characteristics attached to them and the polemical rhetorical conventions used in intergroup disputes. I suggest that this is not a mere coincidence, but is instead a consequence of a strong connection between these two forms of human behaviour. This connection between polemical rhetoric and social identity is twofold. Effective rhetoric of intergroup disputes both rises out of the rhetor's social identity and finds acceptance in the audience with the support of their social identity. Over time, human intuition and experience crafted the polemical rhetoric into a set of fixed conventions that affected people's sense of categorization. The polemical rhetorical conventions are crystallized verbal expression that capture and activate the internal cognitive process of categorization of people into distinctive groups and give the groups stereotypical characteristics. They serve the need to enhance in-group status and denigrate out-group status. The same conventions are passed on from generation to generation and transferred to different social contexts, because they remain effective despite the changing situations. It seems that they are successful in creating and upholding the characterizations of ingroup favouritism and outgroup denigration, because they mobilize the universal cognitive processes that transcend particular contexts.

Although I argue that a strong connection exists between the cognitive and emotional processes that are fundamental to the formation and maintenance of social identity and the conventions of polemical rhetoric, they are two distinctive approaches that can be used to analyse very different aspects of human behaviour. When an individual's social identity is salient in

a particular social situation it affects the interpretation of the social stimuli that the individual encounters. The social world is organized into comprehensible (cognitive) and meaningful (emotional) categories that have the function of enabling effective (group) behaviour. Rhetorical criticism focuses on how the rhetor attempts through discourse to convince his readers to accept his message. The author's social identity affects his rhetorical strategy and a good rhetorician is aware of the audience's affiliation to a certain social group, which he can use to his advantage. The social identity approach can be applied to explain how the author interprets and constructs his social reality, and rhetorical criticism analyses how the author attempts to influence his social world by introducing his gospel to the audience.

Another difference seems to be in the consciousness of the cognitive processes of social identity and the composition of a rhetorical discourse. The interpretation of a social experience through one's social identity seems to be more of an unconscious mental process, while the composition of a rhetorical discourse is more of a conscious effort to reach a particular change in the circumstances, which the rhetor encounters. People seldom actively attempt to categorize themselves as members of a particular group, instead they accept the categorizations as self-evident. The same applies to the stereotypical characterizations of various social groups. An effective rhetorical discourse on the other hand requires careful consideration between the various possible options and conscious decisions that seem most suitable to produce the desired outcome. Often in intergroup disputes the categorization of participants into separate groups and characterization of the out-group are underlying presuppositions upon which the rhetorical strategy is built. They provide the necessary motivation to construct a rhetorical argument. Effective rhetoric in intergroup dispute takes into consideration the categorization and stereotypical characterizations. Their foundation and motivation are often unreflected by the speaker and the audience. Therefore, I do not apply the social identity approach to explain the author's construction of social identity, but to examine how the author's social identity has influenced his behaviour.

How social identity and rhetoric affect the study of historical questions

The author's social identity and rhetoric have significant consequences for a historically oriented study of a particular text. They demonstrate that both the author's interpretation and the presentation of the social reality are processes that distort the actual social reality that lies behind the source. A direct and naive mirror reading of the social reality from the early Christian texts is bound to lead to an inaccurate conclusion. The early Christian sources more or less distort some aspects of the social reality that they reflect. However, by knowing how the sources distort the reality they are reflecting, the actual reality can be reconstructed more reliably. The knowledge of the insights of the social identity approach and rhetorical conventions enables us to reconstruct more accurately the actual social reality in which the written source was composed. In a scholarly endeavour, it is required on the one hand to make a distinction between the actual social reality as it once existed and on the other and the author's interpretation and presentation of it.

The need for this distinction is further highlighted by the combined effect of social identity formation and rhetorical argumentation. The author did not interpret the social world objectively, but through his social identity. Moreover, he did not offer a fair interpretation, already influenced by his social identity, but a rhetorical argument that aims to reach the goal set by the author. The social creativity of the author forms an obstacle between the modern interpreter and the ancient social reality, but the reconstruction of the social context should not be excluded in favour of socially or rhetorically oriented study. Rather, the social identity approach or rhetorical criticism assists us in analysing the interaction between the author and his social reality. The social identity approach looks at how members of a group interpret their social encounters and experiences through their social identity. Rhetorical study focuses on how through a literary the author attempts work to convince his readers. These analyses enable the distinction between what is social reality and what is social creativity.

The relationship between the different methodological approaches

The Gospel of Peter describes the Jews as the murderers of Christ. In this study the Gospel of Peter is analysed from various different perspectives in order to explain how and why the author created this narrative. The methodological discussion has sought to explicate how the different approaches provide information on the author's activity. Throughout this discussion the relationship between different methodological approaches has been examined. The primary aim of the study is not to provide independent analysis of the various aspects, but to bring them together in a way that the conclusions of the different methodological approaches support each other and explain the formation of the Christian anti-Jewish tradition. The final step in this introduction is to summarize the methodological discussion and to explicate how all the methods used in this study relate to each other.

The analysis of the anti-Jewish traditions preserved in the Gospel of Peter must begin with a source and redaction critical study. The diachronic analysis of the text enables us to see what sources the author has used, what he has taken or omitted from them, what changes he has made, and what he has added. The activity of the author also provides information on the reconstruction of the social context in which the text was composed. The reconstruction of the social reality behind the gospel is supported by a comparison with relevant contemporary sources and by placing it in the societal framework in which it was written.

The Gospel of Peter reflects the impact of the social reality where it was written, but also the author's attempt to influence social reality through the text. First, this interaction is analysed in the light of the social identity approach. This analysis seeks to explain the intergroup relations between Christians and Jews, and notably the denigration of the Jewish out-group. The theories and insights of the social identity approach are used to explain the Gospel of Peter's claim that the Jews murdered Christ. The text is seen as a reformulation of the basic Christian myth and through this procedure, the community's identity in a particular social reality and in relation to the challenges faced in it.

Next, the point of view is turned from constructing a social identity to the effective means of communicating this constructed identity to the audience. The text indicates a use of a rhetorical strategy to influence the audience's notions and their behaviour. This study looks at how the author of the Gospel of Peter uses rhetoric to describe the crucial past event – in this case, the passion and resurrection of Jesus – to form an image of that event and especially the Jewish characters involved in it. The narrative contains new ideological conceptions that the author hopes the community will absorb. The rhetoric of the author of the Gospel of Peter is studied within the framework of the rhetorical situation. The historical critical study of the Gospel of Peter distinguishes the sources, traditions and social experiences that constrained the author and provides the necessary information for the reconstruction of the rhetorical situation. The redaction critical study provides insights into the intention of the author. The analysis of the Gospel of Peter is also necessary for the determination of the audience of the gospel. Overall, the reconstruction of the rhetorical situation requires a historical study of the evidence.

Finally, the connection between the construction of social identity and the use of rhetoric is taken under discussion. Even a cursory examination reveals that in the Gospel of Peter, there is a remarkable similarity between the construction of Christian social identity and the use of conventional polemical rhetoric in intergroup disputes. I suggest that the human intuition and experience have crafted the conventions of polemical rhetoric into a form that effectively influences people's sense of categorization and self-enhancement that are crucial for the formation of social identity. The Gospel of Peter bears witness to the influence of the social world on its author and the author's influence on it.

The relationship between the author and his social reality can be analysed in the light of the cultural memory approach. Alan Kirk has applied the cultural memory approach to the Gospel of Peter. He uses cultural memory and orality theory to criticize the methodology and solutions of Crossan, Brown and Koester, who operate within the literary paradigm. Kirk examines the Gospel of Peter's distinctive passion tradition "within the

memory frameworks of the second century.”²⁷⁸ He proposes that “Cultural memory approaches and orality theory offer powerful new ways to conceptualize problems of tradition, writing and canonization.”²⁷⁹ The key events and persons of a community’s past are transformed into the *Erinnerungsfiguren* of a foundational narrative and the passion narrative is the primary *Erinnerungsfigur* in early Christian cultural memory.²⁸⁰ The master commemorative narrative of the past provides cognitive frameworks for the community to interpret the present predicaments and at the same time the present social realities affect the foundational narrative of the past.²⁸¹ Kirk writes: “As is the case with the synoptic and Johannine Passion narrative, in the *GosPet* we see a community’s salient past, embodied in its master commemorative narrative, being told in a such a way as to illuminate present predicaments”²⁸² ... “Likewise the community’s conflicted present shapes the master narrative, not just cosmetically, but to its core.”²⁸³

I do not explicitly apply social memory in this study. However, my analysis could be classified as a social memory approach by using the methodology and terminology of this approach. As far as I see it, the social memory approach explains how the commemorative narrative of the community shapes the interpretation of their present social realities and the present social realities shapes the commemorative narrative. This understanding of the relationship between the commemorative narrative and social realities seems to lead to the methodological approach that I advocate in this study. A study of this relationship requires a knowledge of what was the earlier version (or versions) of the commemorative narrative, the present social realities, and the shaping of the commemorative narrative to the present social realities. In other words the sources, redaction and social context of the Gospel of Peter.

Kirk’s article is an example of the problems that arise when a social memory approach is applied to an ancient text without closely analysing the different stages of the tradition and the present social reality behind the

²⁷⁸ Kirk 2007, 135.

²⁷⁹ Kirk 2007, 135.

²⁸⁰ Kirk 2007, 142.

²⁸¹ Kirk 2007, 143.

²⁸² Kirk 2007, 144.

²⁸³ Kirk 2007, 144.

text. The lack of an analysis of the existing traditions, present social realities and their influence on the existing tradition is apparent in Kirk's application of the social memory approach to the Gospel of Peter. "The *GosPet* is a site in which the *Erinnerungsfigur* of the Passion narrative intersects with the social memory frameworks of the second century. The distinctiveness of the *GosPet* arises from the fact that in it the Passion narrative tradition is being brought into dramatic alignment with the social realities impinging upon the community."²⁸⁴ "In this regard the absence of Romans from the Crucifixion, their role as executioners filled by the Jews, is a classic example of the "forgetting" of an element of a master narrative that does not conform to a community's present realities."²⁸⁵

Does Kirk imply that Jews abused and killed Christians in the second century? In fact, Kirk does not explicitly state this. However, in the Gospel of Peter Pilate and Roman soldiers are exonerated and the Jewish people abuse and crucify Jesus. Kirk argues that the author of the Gospel of Peter brings the master narrative into conformity with the community's social realities. Therefore, the logical conclusion of Kirk's premises is that the Jews persecuted and killed Christians in the second century. Recent scholarship has largely abandoned the previously held conception that Jews persecuted Christian and that this persecution explains the anti-Jewish tendencies of many Christian texts of the second century. This development is also visible in the study of the Gospel of Peter. In her dissertation Schaeffer explains the anti-Jewish tendencies of the Gospel of Peter mainly in terms of the persecution hypothesis, but in Henderson's more recent dissertation the persecution hypothesis is abandoned. If the rivalry between Christians and Jews did not include physical violence and killings, how did the rivalry which did not include physical violence lead to a formation of a passion narrative that describes such actions to the Jewish people? More importantly, in the social reality of the second-century Roman officials and soldiers persecuted Christians and it can be debated how limited or widespread the Roman persecution of Christians was. Be that as it may, in the social reality of the Christian community, it was reasonable to expect the kind of persecution

²⁸⁴ Kirk 2007, 156.

²⁸⁵ Kirk 2007, 157.

described in the Gospel of Peter from the representatives of the Roman state, but not from the members of the Jewish community. Therefore, the author of the Gospel of Peter does not make the master narrative conform to the present realities of the community. He does the opposite. These observations challenge Kirk's straightforward application of social memory to the Gospel of Peter and call for a more thorough approach.

I agree with the social memory approach and apply a similar approach in practice. The main thesis of my study is that the author's changes to the passion narrative were influenced by the social experiences of the community. It is my argument that the problems in Kirk's article result from the omission of an analysis of the author's sources, redaction, and the social context of the Gospel of Peter. My proposal is that source and redaction critical analysis of the evidence and a reconstruction of the social context behind the text are necessary to apply the social memory approach to the study of the Gospel of Peter.

Heikki Räisänen writes, "historical criticism remains indispensable, if one asks historical questions".²⁸⁶ The question of the formation of Christian anti-Jewish traditions is a historical question. Therefore, historical critical methods are indispensable in the study of the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter. I understand the development of the anti-Jewish traditions of the Gospel of Peter within Räisänen's model of tradition, experience and interpretation. In order to explain the development of the anti-Jewish traditions of the Gospel of Peter, the traditions, experiences and interpretation of the author of the Gospel of Peter have to be carefully separated. The traditions of the author and his community were the canonical gospels and some non-canonical traditions. The experience that led to a new interpretation of these traditions was an encounter with Jewish critics and criticism of the gospel traditions. The experience was essentially social in nature and it influenced the author's interpretation of the existing traditions. The author's interpretation is characterized by the apologetic and polemical redaction. The apologetic redaction functions as a defence of the Christian traditions and the anti-Jewish polemic functions as an offensive in the dispute

²⁸⁶ Räisänen 2005, 411.

with the Jewish critics. Methodologically, source criticism, redaction criticism, and the reconstruction of the social context of the Gospel of Peter provide information to help us understand the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter within Räisänen's model of tradition, experience and interpretation. The interpretation of the author is further explained by rhetorical criticism and the social identity approach. My rhetorical critical study follows the reconstruction of the rhetorical situation. The exigence and the most important constraints of the rhetorical situation are found in the author's experience of the disputes between Jews and Christians over the gospel traditions. The exigence was to remove the threat of Jewish criticism. The gospel traditions and the criticism of them constrained the author's response to the exigence. A distinction between the rhetorical situation and the historical situation will enable a more profound understanding of the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter. The Jewish critics were central to the historical situation behind the Gospel of Peter, but the audience of the rhetorical situation were the members of the Christian community. The author of the Gospel of Peter responds to criticism from outside the community, but the rhetorical response is directed to the Christian community. The social identity approach explains the author's interpretation of the social experience. He was a member of the Christian community and his sense of social identity influenced his behaviour in the interaction between the religious groups. Cognitive and motivational aspects of the mind provided the parameters of the creation of the negative social stereotype of the Jews. The author categorized the Jews as murderers of the Lord. The structures of the mind explain why it was possible to present all Jews as murderers of the Lord and why this functioned as an effective response to the disputes between the two religious communities. Historical critical methods provide information on the interaction between the social situation (traditions, experiences) and the individual (interpretation) that is necessary for the rhetorical critical and social identity approach to the study of the Gospel of Peter. These approaches in turn explain the interpretation of the author and together they provide an explanation why the author of the Gospel of Peter created an anti-Jewish gospel where all Jews were responsible for the murder of the Lord.

The different methods discussed in this chapter shed light on the different stages of this process. The relationship between the different methodological approaches can be compared to a mathematical clause. If one of the variables is changed from positive to negative, the whole result of the clause changes as well. Similarly, if the literary critical study of the Gospel of Peter resulted in an opposite conclusion, in principle the construction of Christian identity represented by the text would have to be evaluated differently. In practice, the closest methodological approach functions as the first corrective of the previous application of another method and the results gained from this endeavour. Together, the different methodological approaches provide a reconstruction of the social history of the past.

1.4. Outline of the study

The available evidence of the Gospel of Peter and the methodology of this study requires that I clarify how I apply the above-discussed methods to the available evidence. The main body of this study examines the composition history of the Gospel of Peter. In the second chapter I examine the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. The fragmentary nature of the evidence of the Gospel of Peter is taken into consideration when I analyse its relationship to the canonical gospels. I compare the entire preserved evidence, including the P. Oxy. 4009 fragment, to the parallel narratives of the canonical gospels. I examine the most notable similarities and differences between them and reach a conclusion on the overall evidence. The purpose of this examination is to demonstrate that the cumulative evidence supports the conclusion that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on the canonical gospels. I will argue that the similarities between the gospels, in particular the traditions which the Gospel of Peter shares with only one of the canonical gospels, support the priority of the canonical gospels. I will also argue that the differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels do not present an obstacle to the former's dependence on the latter. They rather reflect an insightful redaction of the canonical

traditions, which in fact supports a literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels.

In chapters three, four and five I analyse the Gospel of Peter in closer detail. Throughout the analysis of the Akhmîm fragment I will examine the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. I will argue that a literary dependence between them provides the most plausible explanation of their shared content and vocabulary. There are also several features in the Gospel of Peter, which indicate that the author used various sources. These include above all the notable inconsistencies in the narrative which can be explained by the theory that the author of the Gospel of Peter combined traditions from all of the canonical gospels. The analysis of the Akhmîm fragment demonstrates a consistent and insightful redaction of the canonical tradition, which indicates that the author knew the canonical gospels profoundly and this further supports a literary dependence between them.

The analysis of the Gospel of Peter follows the methodology that was laid out in the first chapter. However, there is one notable difference in this study that needs to be addressed and explained before the analysis of the text, and that is that I do not analyse the Akhmîm fragment in the sequence of the narrative. I begin the analysis of the text by examining the scenes that describe the burial (Gos. Pet. 2:3–2:5a, 6:23–6:24), the disciples (Gos. Pet. 7:26–7:27, 14:58–14:60) and the empty tomb (Gos. Pet. 12:50–13:57). The burial and empty tomb narratives have extensive verbal agreement with Mark. An examination of the entire evidence in chapter two indicates that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on Matthew, Luke and John through some medium of communication. The examination of the burial and empty tomb narratives support a literary dependence between Mark and the Gospel of Peter. The description of the disciples in the Gospel of Peter does not have extensive verbal agreements with the canonical gospels, but the content of these traditions indicates that they are secondary expansions of the passion and resurrection narratives. The analysis of the description of the burial, the disciples and the empty tomb in the Gospel of Peter also provides insights into the redaction of the author. I depart from the sequence of the text, because the

sources and the redaction of the author can be demonstrated more clearly if the analysis follows the argumentation instead of the sequence of the text. For example, the description of the burial consists of the request (V. 2-5) and the burial of the body (V. 23-24). The request and burial appear together in the canonical gospels, but not in the Gospel of Peter. There are striking verbal agreements between the burial pericope of Mark 15:42–47 and the Gospel of Peter. The verbal agreements between the two gospels can be analysed more appropriately when the request and the burial are analysed together. I criticize Schaeffer's analysis of the relationship between Mark and the Gospel of Peter, because she does not examine these sections together and this creates the impression that the similarities appear to be less extensive than they actually are.²⁸⁷

The purpose of my study is not to explain the Gospel of Peter, but to construct an argument of the development of the anti-Jewish traditions it contains. Part of this argument is to analyse the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. The decision to analyse the request and the actual burial together serves this purpose. The text is analysed as it existed in the chapters of the social identity and the rhetorical criticism, because these chapters examine how the text attempts to construct social identity and influences its audience. In other words, the text can be analysed in the sequence of the narrative and it can be analysed by focusing on some separate sections of the narrative. This depends on what one attempts to find out and what methodology is applied. In my study I apply both approaches, because my research questions and methodology require this.

In chapter four I examine the resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter (8:28–11:49). Among the canonical gospels only Matthew contains a parallel narrative to this section of the Gospel of Peter. The analysis of the guard at the tomb narrative focuses on explaining the relationship between these versions of the narrative and the development of the tradition by the author of the Gospel of Peter. In both gospels the narrative consists of three scenes. The guard is placed at the tomb, the events at the tomb are narrated and those responsible for the tomb agree to suppress knowledge of the

²⁸⁷ See below chapter 3.4.

resurrection. In addition to the similar structure of the narratives, both gospels share several details and an extensive verbal agreement. However, in the Gospel of Peter many of the details are described differently and the narrative includes notable traditions that are not found in Matthew's narrative. The most significant of them is the description of the resurrection itself. In the Gospel of Peter Jesus emerges from the tomb with two angels who escort him in His ascension. The escorted resurrection tradition establishes the Gospel of Peter 8:28–11:49 as a resurrection narrative instead of a guard at the tomb narrative of Matthew 27:62–28:15. At the same time, the women's discovery of the tomb, the centrepiece of Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative, is narrated separately after the resurrection narrative. The form of the narrative in the Gospel of Peter presents a challenge to the priority of Matthew's version of the narrative. I will argue that only the author's knowledge of the other canonical gospels provides a plausible explanation for the form of the Gospel of Peter's resurrection and empty tomb narratives and the priority of the canonical gospels. I will also argue that the author of the Gospel of Peter inserted independent traditions into the guard at the tomb narrative. The redaction of the author demonstrates similar apologetic and polemical traditions as the redaction of the burial, the disciples' activities and the empty tomb.

In chapter five I examine the passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter (1:1–1:2, 2:5b–6:22, 7:25) and argue that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on the canonical gospels in this section as well. In the passion narrative the author draws primarily on Matthew, but in the crucifixion scene (Gos. Pet. 4:10–4:14) there is strong evidence of a literary dependence on Luke and John. The redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter reflects the continuing influence of the Old Testament prophetic texts and the growing anti-Jewish sentiment. The apologetic and polemical redaction explains the differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. More importantly, the analysis will demonstrate that there is no evidence of early or pre-canonical traditions in the Gospel of Peter.

Throughout the analysis of the Akhmîm fragment I will argue that the evidence supports a literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and

the canonical gospels. The detailed textual analysis of the Akhmîm fragment and the overall analysis of the entire preserved evidence provide different approaches to the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels and the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. At the same time, they support each other and the conclusion that a literary dependence exists between the canonical gospels and the Gospel of Peter.

In the beginning of the sixth chapter I provide a summary of the source and redaction critical study of the Gospel of Peter. The results of this study are used to present a hypothesis of the social context in which the Gospel of Peter was written. The distinction between the sources the author used, including the canonical and extra-canonical sources, and the author's redaction is vital for a reconstruction of the social context behind the Gospel of Peter. I conclude that apologetic and polemical redaction are characteristic features of the Gospel of Peter. The author of the Gospel of Peter provides detailed apologetic redaction for the problems within and between the canonical gospels. The author also consistently describes the Jewish leaders and people in an extremely negative light throughout the extant fragment. The apologetic and polemical redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter is used to reconstruct a hypothesis of the social context behind the Gospel of Peter. I will argue that the apologetic and polemical redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter is a reaction to Jewish criticism against Christian traditions. The redaction critical study of the Gospel of Peter leads me to criticize previous studies of the social context behind the Gospel of Peter. The apologetic and polemical redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter has been noted earlier in the scholarship, but I will argue that it is incorrect to conclude that the response to Jewish criticism is directed towards Jewish critics and that the hostile polemic in the Gospel of Peter reflects any form of persecution.

This hypothesis of the social context behind the Gospel of Peter is supported by comparing the evidence of the Gospel of Peter with other early Christian sources from the second century. The comparison is carried out in order to demonstrate that the author's redaction of his sources addresses various points of conflict that are described in a more extensive and explicit

manner in several sources from the second century. In other words, the sources of the Gospel of Peter and the author's redaction are examined in order to reconstruct the social context behind the text by comparing the author's activity to the relevant contemporary sources. Finally, I will place the reconstructed social context behind the Gospel of Peter within the larger social context of second-century Christianity. In the second-century context the Romans presented an actual threat of persecution to the Christians. However, they are described in a positive light in the Gospel of Peter. I will argue that persecution did not play a role in the formation of the Gospel of Peter, instead the evidence supports the conclusion that the Gospel of Peter reflects the verbal polemics between Christians and Jews.

I will analyse the anti-Jewish rhetoric of the Gospel of Peter in the light of the verbal polemics between Christians and Jews. The concept of a rhetorical situation is central in the rhetorical study of the Gospel of Peter. I will argue that a distinction between the social situation and the rhetorical situation of the Gospel of Peter provides the necessary analytical tools to solve the different interpretations of the social context of the Gospel of Peter. My thesis is that the Gospel of Peter responds to the criticism that some Jews levelled against the gospel. The author of the Gospel of Peter responded to this criticism by presenting an apology for the Christian gospels and the polemic against the traditions that are contained within them. However, I will argue that the response was not directed towards Jewish critics, but rather to the members of the Christian community who were, or the author feared would be, troubled by the criticism. My thesis is that the rhetorical situation of the Gospel of Peter was comprised primarily of the existing gospel traditions, Jewish criticism of these traditions, and a response to this criticism that was directed towards a Christian audience. I will examine the rhetoric of the Gospel of Peter within the framework of this reconstructed rhetorical situation.

The analysis of the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter is completed with a social psychological explanation of the author's behaviour. I will argue that the author of the Gospel of Peter behaved in manner that is consistent with the social identity approach. The Jewish community and the

criticism that originated within the Jewish community posed a challenge to the social identity of the author of the Gospel of Peter. The author created a maximum distinction between Jews and Christians by emphasizing that the Christians were loyal followers of Jesus and the Jews were Jesus's murderers. The social identity approach provides an explanation why the author of the Gospel of Peter presented the Jews as the main opponents to Christians, while in the social reality of the second century the Roman officials and soldiers, who are exonerated in the passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter, were the real threat to the existence of the Christian community and its members. The social identity approach ultimately explains the anti-Jewish passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter.

2. The Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels

2.1. Introduction

A literary dependence between ancient texts, for example the synoptic gospels, is established by comparing the vocabulary and sequence over extensive sections of the respective texts.²⁸⁸ However, a study of the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels presents a more challenging task, because only a fragment of sixty verses of the passion and resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter has been preserved.²⁸⁹ It was noted above that the comparison of the vocabulary of the available evidence has produced contradictory interpretations. Moreover, in the preserved fragment the sequence is to a large extent determined by the natural course of events. The fragmentary evidence does not allow a similar analysis of extensive sections of the texts that has been crucial in the examination of the synoptic problem. However, the fragmentary evidence does enable a comparison of the entire evidence of the Gospel of Peter with the content of the canonical gospels in one chapter at a reasonable depth. This comparison focuses on the items or episodes that are shared or not shared by the Gospel of Peter and one or several of the canonical gospels. In other words, the focus is on the most notable similarities and differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. The examination of the entire fragment as a whole produces cumulative evidence that is not visible in the analysis of the individual sections of the text. The examination of the different sections of the Gospel of Peter, including the detailed analysis of the vocabulary, is carried out in the following chapters.

In recent scholarship, Brown has presented the most extensive comparison of the content and sequence of the entire Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. Brown's analysis offers comprehensive lists of the items that are shared or are not shared by the Gospel of Peter and only one of the canonical gospels. The shared items provide Brown with his main argument

²⁸⁸ Catchpole 1997, 171.

²⁸⁹ Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 4009 is a fragment of the Gospel of Peter, but it is too fragmentary to be included in the discussion of a *literary* dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels.

against the priority of the Gospel of Peter over the canonical gospels. The Gospel of Peter contains several traditions that are found in only one of the canonical gospels. Brown argues that the most likely explanation of this evidence is that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew the canonical gospels.²⁹⁰ Crossan admits that the items that are shared by the Gospel of Peter and only one of the canonical gospels are the main obstacle to his thesis concerning the *Cross Gospel*.²⁹¹ Foster also examines the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels primarily in the light of the most notable traditions that are shared by the Gospel of Peter and only one of the canonical gospels.²⁹² Therefore, the items that are shared by the Gospel of Peter and only one of the canonical gospels are a logical point to begin the overall examination of the relationship between them.

Brown's analysis provides evidence of the Gospel of Peter's dependence on the canonical gospels. However, it does not demonstrate that the dependence on the canonical gospels is of a literary nature nor does it exclude the possibility that the author of the Gospel of Peter also knew of extensive pre-canonical traditions or sources. Brown observes that the Gospel of Peter does not include several items that are present in the parallel sections of the canonical gospels. He argues that if the author of the Gospel of Peter had been working with written copies of the canonical gospels, such an extensive number of traditions would not have been omitted.²⁹³ The lack of extensive verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels also supports this conclusion. Brown has compared the verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels to the verbal agreements that exist between the synoptic gospels, and also between the Diatessaron and the canonical gospels. The synoptic gospels and the Diatessaron include extensive evidence of a literary dependence, while the Gospel of Peter does not. Brown argues that these comparisons demonstrate that the author of the Gospel of Peter did not consult copies of the canonical gospels when he composed his gospel.²⁹⁴ Furthermore, in his analysis of the

²⁹⁰ Brown 1994, 1328–1331.

²⁹¹ Crossan 1988, 18–20.

²⁹² Foster 2011, 131–148.

²⁹³ Brown 1994, 1333–1334.

²⁹⁴ Brown 1987, 333–335; Brown 1994, 1334.

guard at the tomb narratives of Matthew and the Gospel of Peter, Brown concludes that the author of the latter knew the former and also a consecutive guard at the tomb narrative that was also known to Matthew.²⁹⁵ In other words, Brown argues for the priority of the Matthean version, but also concludes that both authors knew an earlier version of the narrative, which is by definition pre-canonical.

Recently, Foster has examined the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels by comparing their content. Foster's approach has a striking methodological resemblance to Brown's analysis. Foster analyses the Gospel of Peter's "most decisive examples of literary dependence" with each of the canonical gospels.²⁹⁶ In practice, Foster offers a more detailed comparison of the most notable items in Brown's lists of shared items between the Gospel of Peter and only one of the canonical gospels. Foster's approach, however, is in other regards different from the one presented by Brown. Foster focuses only on the shared items and does not discuss the items of the canonical gospels that are not found in the Gospel of Peter. This approach is methodologically one-sided and emphasizes the similarities over the differences. A similar analysis should be applied to the differences as well. In this regard Brown's approach, although less detailed in the analysis of the shared items, is methodologically more balanced.

Despite their methodological differences, Brown and Foster reach similar conclusions in their analyses of the content of the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. Brown argues that the author of the Gospel of Peter had studied Matthew carefully in the past.²⁹⁷ Foster also claims that the case for literary borrowing from Matthew is extremely strong. He admits that it is possible that the author of the Gospel of Peter relied on his memory rather than a written copy of Matthew when he composed his gospel.²⁹⁸ It is apparent that Foster and Brown define literary dependence differently. According to Foster, relying on memory constitutes literary borrowing, whereas in Brown's terms this constitutes secondary oral dependence. Brown and Foster agree that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew of several

²⁹⁵ Brown 1994, 1284–1313, especially 1299–1310.

²⁹⁶ Foster 2010, 132.

²⁹⁷ Brown 1994, 1334.

²⁹⁸ Foster 2010, 131–138.

traditions from Luke.²⁹⁹ Brown reaches the conclusion that the author of the Gospel of Peter was familiar with John as well,³⁰⁰ but Foster argues that there is not enough evidence to demonstrate dependence.³⁰¹ The notable difference between Brown and Foster is in their analysis of the Gospel of Peter's relationship to Mark. Foster supports literary dependence between these gospels,³⁰² while Brown rejects this conclusion.³⁰³ This disagreement, however, ultimately derives from their different interpretations of the empty tomb narratives and is not derived from the analysis of the overall content of the Gospel of Peter.

In this chapter I will analyse the items that are shared by the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels with the aim of demonstrating the priority of the canonical gospels. The examination of the shared items has been divided into two sections. Whereas the elements that the Gospel of Peter share with Matthew, Luke and John are examined together, the shared items between the Gospel of Peter and Mark are discussed separately. Mark's separate treatment is necessary because it holds a unique position among the canonical gospels. Matthew and Luke used Mark as their source and there are only a few items in Mark's passion narrative that are not found in the other gospels.³⁰⁴ Therefore, providing elements that only Mark shares with the Gospel of Peter is a more difficult task than a similar comparison with Matthew, Luke and John. The limited amount of material that is characteristic of Mark requires a separate discussion that takes this into consideration. The relationship between the Gospel of Peter and Mark is ultimately determined by the analysis of the empty tomb narrative. However, there are some minor elements that are shared only by the Gospel of Peter and Mark. The total number of elements that are unique to Mark among the canonical gospels is very limited and this makes Mark's unique agreements with the Gospel of Peter significant in supporting dependence between these two gospels.

The items that are not shared by the Gospel of Peter and one or several of the canonical gospels are also discussed. This can be seen as similar

²⁹⁹ Brown 1994, 1330; Foster 2010, 142–145.

³⁰⁰ Brown 1994, 1330–1331.

³⁰¹ Foster 2010, 145–146.

³⁰² Foster 2010, 139–142.

³⁰³ Brown 1994, 1335.

³⁰⁴ Foster 2010, 139, 141.

to Brown's approach and as an indirect criticism of Foster's methodology, for Foster only examines the notable similarities. Although Brown's approach is methodologically more balanced than Foster's is, I will argue that there are methodological problems in Brown's actual comparison of the items that are not shared by the Gospel of Peter and one or several of the canonical gospels. The most troubling methodological flaw in Brown's treatment of the differences is the fact that he introduces several items to all of his lists that fall beyond the scope of the Gospel of Peter that has been preserved in the Akhmîm fragment. A less significant problem is the fact that the same or similar items are repeated in various comparisons. Together the introduction of non-existent differences and the repetition of existing differences create an impression of a greater disagreement between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels than actually exists. I will argue that the actual differences can be explained either as the redactional preferences of the author of the Gospel of Peter or his selections between the contradictory traditions of the canonical gospels. The differences in the sequence of the Gospel of Peter are also explained by the redaction of the author. In fact, the differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels in the content and sequence demonstrate the author's ability to handle his sources at such a high level of sophistication that they support the Gospel of Peter's literary dependence on the written copies of the canonical gospels. Finally, I will criticize Brown's methodology of comparing the composition of the Gospel of Peter to the composition of the synoptic gospels and the Diatessaron. The latter are examples of a literary dependence where authors preserved much of the vocabulary of their sources, but these examples do not explain the use of sources by another author who decided to preserve less of their vocabulary. Moreover, I will argue that the purpose and technique of the composition of the author of the Gospel of Peter was very different from that of Matthew, Luke and Tatian.

2.2. The Gospel of Peter's dependence on the canonical gospels

The numerous shared elements that are found only in the Gospel of Peter and one of the canonical gospels provide the most conclusive evidence of some kind of dependence between them. These similarities are present throughout the Gospel of Peter from the first verse to the last.³⁰⁵ The extent of these shared elements does not become visible in the detailed analysis of individual verses or sections of the narrative. An examination of these similarities together produces cumulative evidence of the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and canonical gospels. It also provides a foundation upon which the analyses of the individual sections of the narrative can be constructed. In somewhat simplified terms, it can be argued that the overall examination of the shared elements between the Gospel of Peter and only one of the canonical gospels demonstrates the former's dependence on the latter, while the analyses of the different sections of the narrative provide an explanation of the various differences in the shared elements. Ultimately, these two approaches support each other in explaining the apocryphon's relationship to the canonical gospels. The overall examination of the entire narrative before the individual analyses of the episodes also helps to avoid repeating the same argument time and again.

It was noted above that the Gospel of Peter contains several traditions and these traditions are characteristic to only one of the canonical gospels. Brown uses this evidence to criticize Crossan's thesis concerning the earliest passion narrative embedded in the Gospel of Peter.³⁰⁶ Foster's analysis of the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels relies on a similar comparison.³⁰⁷ It is always somewhat subjective what exactly constitutes a parallel between them and which elements should be included in a comparison between two texts. Brown's treatment of the similarities is much more inclusive than Foster's discussion of the most decisive examples.³⁰⁸ In the following comparison I have presented the most

³⁰⁵ Brown 1994, 1327–1331.

³⁰⁶ Brown 1994, 1332–1333.

³⁰⁷ Foster 2010, 131–147.

³⁰⁸ Vaganay 1930, 46–47 divided the parallels into three different categories depending on their significance.

important parallels. These elements can by themselves provide evidence of a dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. The minor similarities, such as shared words or expressions, are discussed in the detailed textual analysis in chapters four to six. They can provide cumulative evidence only if the more evident parallels establish a dependence between the texts. In the end the inclusion or exclusion of various individual elements can be debated, but the general thrust of the argument is unaffected by the precise number or content of the parallels.

The following lists of elements shared by the Gospel of Peter and only one of the canonical gospels relies primarily on the items that both Brown and Foster include in their analysis.³⁰⁹ Although I have drawn heavily on previous scholarship, the selection of the shared elements presents my own judgement. The most apparent difference from the earlier scholarship is that I have also included elements of Matthew's and Luke's redaction that are preserved in the P. Oxy. 4009 fragment of the Gospel of Peter. These strengthen the argument further, but their omission would not undermine the validity of the argument.

Items that are shared by the Gospel of Peter and Matthew.

Guard at the tomb	Matt. 27:62–28:15	Gos. Pet. 8:28–11:49
- Jewish leaders gather		
- Pharisees		
- Request of soldiers from Pilate		
- Sealed tomb		
Pilate's hand washing	Matt. 27:24	Gos. Pet. 1:1
Pilate's innocence	Matt. 27:24	Gos. Pet. 11:46
Earthquake	Matt. 27:51	Gos. Pet. 6:21
Joseph's own tomb	Matt. 27:60	Gos. Pet. 6:24
Doves and serpents	Matt. 10:16	P. Oxy. 4009
with wolves among sheep		

Items that are shared by the Gospel of Peter and Luke.

Penitent thief	Luke 23:39–43	Gos. Pet. 4:13–4:14
- Thieves called <i>κακοῦργοι</i>		
Herod's involvement	Luke 23:6–12	Gos. Pet. 1:1–2:5
- Pilate and Herod friends		
People's lament	Luke 23:48	Gos. Pet. 7:25, 8:28

³⁰⁹ Brown 1994, 1327–1331; Foster 2010, 137–145.

Items that are shared by the Gospel of Peter and John.

Crucifixion date	John 19:31	Gos. Pet. 2:5
Legs not broken	John 19:31–37	Gos. Pet. 4:14
Nails in the hands	John 20:25	Gos. Pet. 6:21
Garden tomb	John 19:41	Gos. Pet. 6:24
Fear of the Jews	John 19:38	Gos. Pet. 12:50
Appearance by the sea	John 21:1–21	Gos. Pet. 14:60

It is virtually inconceivable that each of the four evangelists knew an early passion narrative that included all these elements and incorporated them into their gospels without agreeing with others. Only a minority of the elements are included in the redactional layers in Crossan's theory. The items that are found in only one of the canonical gospels are evenly distributed between Crossan's supposedly redactional layers and the *Cross Gospel*.³¹⁰ Especially problematic for Crossan's theory is the supposed redaction of Mark. Crossan's theory requires that Mark omitted all of the above-mentioned items. The opposite direction of dependence offers a logical explanation for the similarities. The author of the Gospel of Peter knew the canonical gospels and combined the various elements from them into his gospel.

Dennis MacDonald raised essentially the same objection against Crossan's thesis at the 1986 SBL convention. In his monograph, Crossan addressed the criticism presented by MacDonald, but his response could also have been directed at the criticism presented by Brown. Crossan concedes that this is a serious objection. He presents one example where Luke and John have a common tradition with the *Cross Gospel*. In the Gospel of Peter there are two angels in the resurrection narrative (Gos. Pet. 9:36–10:40). Luke 24:4 and John 20:12 also mention two angels in the empty tomb narrative, while Mark 16:5 and Matthew 28:2 mention only one angel. According to Crossan, this is an example where Luke and John followed the *Cross Gospel* instead of Mark. Crossan also argues that Matthew, Luke and John preferred Mark as their primary source to the *Cross Gospel* and inserted only certain elements

³¹⁰ Brown 1994, 1332–1333.

from the latter into the framework of the former. Finally, Crossan points out that the argument is a negative one. One would indeed expect that Matthew, Luke and John would have chosen at least some common elements from their secondary source, but nothing in the evidence demands this. Crossan admits that he cannot explain this negative objection. Nevertheless, he prefers his theory of the *Cross Gospel*, because there are more problems in the alternative thesis that the Gospel of Peter is a digest of the canonical gospels.³¹¹

Crossan's reply fails to convince. A more likely explanation of the evidence is that the author of the Gospel of Peter harmonized the traditions of the canonical gospels. In the Gospel of Peter two angels appear in the resurrection narrative (Gos. Pet. 9:35–10:42), but one angel appears in the empty tomb narrative (Gos. Pet. 12:50–13:57). A more plausible explanation is that the author of the Gospel of Peter placed Mark's and Matthew's angel in the empty tomb narrative and Luke's and John's two angels in the resurrection narrative. The presence of the two angels in Luke and John can be explained as the independent redaction of both evangelists.

The preference of Mark over the *Cross Gospel* does not invalidate the fact that in Crossan's theory Matthew, Luke and John took at least five elements from a relative short section of a narrative without agreeing with each other. They might have considered Mark as the primary source, but the selection of numerous elements from a relatively short narrative without a single occasion where two authors would have taken the same element borders on the miraculous. Especially when the alternative that the author of the Gospel of Peter took these elements from the canonical gospels explains the existence of the parallels without such serious problems.

Crossan's reply demonstrates a fundamental weakness in his thesis, but he has at least addressed the issue, while others who have argued that the Gospel of Peter contains pre-canonical traditions have focused only on evidence that can be interpreted to support such claims. Koester and Dewey assign far fewer elements to the early passion and resurrection narratives, but their theses of the earliest layers also include elements that are

³¹¹ Crossan 1988, 19–20.

found in only one of the canonical gospels.³¹² It is difficult to see how a consecutive narrative could be reconstructed which avoids the criticism that the Gospel of Peter contains various items from the canonical gospels. This process is made even more difficult if the less significant items or the verbal agreements of a few words are taken into consideration. The opposite thesis that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on the canonical gospels offers a more plausible explanation concerning the similarities between the gospels. Therefore, the shared items between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels demonstrate the priority of the latter.

Mark and the Gospel of Peter

The Gospel of Peter contains several traditions that are found only in Matthew, Luke or John. This evidence supports the priority of the canonical gospels. However, the situation is different when the Gospel of Peter and Mark are compared. The Gospel of Peter does not contain several or notable traditions that are found only in Mark and the few items that are only found in these two gospels are separate details that have been placed in a different context in the narrative. The lack of distinctively Markan elements in the Gospel of Peter is a consequence of the position that Mark holds among the synoptic gospels. According to the widely accepted two-source hypothesis, Matthew and Luke used Mark independently as their primary source. Matthew followed Mark very closely throughout his gospel and Luke reproduced more than half of Mark. There are only a few distinctive elements that are found in Mark. Moreover, quotations from Mark are difficult to find in the texts of Christian authors from the first centuries and the preference for Matthew seems to have been very common.³¹³

This general observation applies to the passion narratives of the synoptic gospels as well. Together Matthew and Luke used virtually all the elements of Mark 15:1–16:8. In a few instances both authors independently omitted the same Markan material that is significant enough for the present discussion. The two notable items that are found only in Mark's passion

³¹² Koester 1990 216–240; Dewey 1990, 101–127.

³¹³ Foster 2010, 139, 141.

narrative are the hour of crucifixion (Mark 15:25) and the confirmation of Jesus's death (Mark 15:44–45).³¹⁴ This ensured that some characteristically Markan elements of the passion narrative survive. It is, however, less likely that a later author would have included many elements that are characteristic of Mark in his gospel. The fact that Matthew and Luke independently omitted the same tradition indicates that both regarded it as somehow problematic or unnecessary. The use of characteristically Markan elements becomes even less likely, if the author of the Gospel of Peter also knew Matthew and Luke. If the author of the Gospel of Peter had included a unique Markan element, he would not have noticed or agreed with Matthew's and Luke's decision to leave out that particular item of Mark's narrative. When all these factors are taken into consideration, it is surprising that a few characteristically Markan elements appear in the Gospel of Peter.

Levi	Mark 2:14	Gos. Pet. 14:60
κεντυρίων	Mark 15:15	Gos. Pet. 8:30, 11:45
Hour of crucifixion	Mark 15:25	Gos. Pet. 5:15

The number and significance of the shared elements are, as expected, far less notable than with the other canonical gospels. A closer examination reveals further differences in the use of these elements. In Mark Jesus calls Levi early in his ministry, while in the Gospel of Peter he is mentioned in the appearance narrative. The fragment breaks off in the middle of the sentence when Levi is introduced. It seems likely that the sentence continued along the lines who the Lord had called. This likely continuation of the missing text expands the parallel to suggest more conclusive evidence of dependence. The term κεντυρίων can be included among the shared items only if a different methodology is applied in the comparison between Mark and the Gospel of Peter. The hour of crucifixion is not nearly as striking as the examples in the other gospels. In the light of the reservations noted above, these similarities are intriguing, but they do not provide enough evidence to demonstrate that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on Mark.

³¹⁴ Foster 2010, 141.

The dependence between Mark and the Gospel of Peter rests on the similarities and the verbal agreements in the empty tomb narratives. Especially the extensive verbal agreement between Mark 16:3 and the Gospel of Peter 12:53–12:54 supports the dependence between the two gospels.³¹⁵ The similarities between the two empty tomb narratives are so extensive that Crossan regarded the Gospel of Peter as dependent on Mark in this periscope.³¹⁶ However, Koester, Dewey and Brown have challenged this conclusion.³¹⁷ The empty tomb narrative is not a unique feature found only in the Gospel of Peter and Mark and a detailed analysis is postponed to the next chapter. To anticipate the results of that analysis, I will argue that the Gospel of Peter's empty tomb narrative demonstrates the apocryphon's dependence on Mark. In the light of the evidence of the empty tomb narrative and the difficulties in finding characteristically Markan elements in any ancient source, the few elements that are shared only by Mark and the Gospel of Peter support the dependence between these two gospels.³¹⁸ The parallel elements that are found only in Mark and the Gospel of Peter are not conclusive enough to demonstrate a dependence between them. Dependence has to be demonstrated on the basis of the similarities in the empty tomb narratives. If it can be shown that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on Mark in this pericope, the few elements that are shared by these two gospels alone provide cumulative evidence to support this conclusion.

The possibility of dependence and independence

The evidence demonstrates that the Gospel of Peter is in one way or another dependent on the canonical gospels. This conclusion still leaves open many questions about how and why the details of the Gospel of Peter are to be explained within a theory of its dependence on the canonical gospels. These problems, however, are far less complicated than those involved in the opposite thesis of dependence. Answering the questions how and why the author of the Gospel of Peter composed his gospel is the primary task of

³¹⁵ Foster 2010, 139–140.

³¹⁶ Crossan 1988, 281–290.

³¹⁷ Koester 1990, 230; Dewey 1990, 105; Brown 1994, 1335.

³¹⁸ See below chapter 3.3; see Foster 2010, 139–142.

chapters 4–6. At this point, we can conclude that the evidence in the Gospel of Peter presupposes the existence and knowledge of the canonical gospels through some medium. This statement, however, does not lead to the conclusion that significant sections of the apocryphon cannot come from pre-canonical sources or traditions. The most outstanding example of this is Brown’s position on the sources for the guard at the tomb narratives. Brown argues that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on Matthew and an independent version of the narrative. According to Brown Matthew also knew and used this independent guard at the tomb narrative. He justifies the existence of a no longer extant independent form of the narrative by referring to the different forms of the two extant narratives. In Matthew the placement of the guard (Matt. 27:62–66) and the report of the guards (Matt. 28:11–15) frame the women’s discovery of the empty tomb (Matt. 28:1–10), which is almost entirely derived from Mark 16:1–8. The only significant addition is Jesus’s appearance to the women (Matt. 28:9–10). In the Gospel of Peter, however, the guard at the tomb narrative forms a consecutive story (Gos. Pet. 8:28–11:49) which is followed by an empty tomb narrative (Gos. Pet. 12:50–13:57) that closely resembles Mark’s account. Brown argues that it is unlikely that the author of the Gospel of Peter would have reconstructed his narrative in this manner if he only knew Matthew’s version of the guard at the tomb narrative. A more plausible explanation of the different structures of the two parallel narratives is that both authors knew an independent consecutive narrative. Brown concludes that Matthew placed Mark’s empty tomb narrative in the middle of this consecutive narrative, while the Gospel of Peter’s author placed it after the consecutive narrative.³¹⁹

If Matthew knew this hypothetical consecutive narrative, it would by definition be a pre-canonical gospel source. In other words, Brown uses the above-mentioned similarities between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels to argue for the former’s dependence on the latter, but at the same time proposes that the Gospel of Peter is also dependent on a source that is at least earlier than Matthew. The guard at the tomb narrative covers over a third of the extant Gospel of Peter. Surely, the use of an extensive source along with

³¹⁹ Brown 1994, 1284–1313.

Matthew would have left other pre-canonical elements in the Gospel of Peter than the mere consecutive form of the narrative. Acceptance of Brown's hypothesis would then lead to an examination of the pre-canonical traditions that are preserved only in the Gospel of Peter's version of the narrative, to investigating which elements that are common to both narratives belonged to the pre-canonical source, and how each author has used this source. I will argue below that Brown's thesis of an early consecutive guard at the tomb narrative is unnecessary to explain the existence of the two different versions of the same narrative.³²⁰ What Brown's analysis illustrates is that the similarities between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels demonstrates the former's dependence on the latter, but they do not exclude an extensive use of pre-canonical sources or traditions.³²¹

Several scholars have argued that the Gospel of Peter contains early traditions without discussing the above-mentioned similarities. Brown's analysis of the Gospel of Peter demonstrates that these claims cannot be dismissed by simply referring to the significant number of shared traditions between the Gospel of Peter and individual canonical gospels. This opens the door for the question which traditions in the Gospel of Peter are earlier than the canonical gospels, and this in turn leads to the question that if there are pre-canonical elements preserved in the Gospel of Peter, do they contain some of the anti-Jewish elements? Moreover, if there are pre-canonical anti-Jewish gospel traditions in the Gospel of Peter, in what context did these traditions arise and which reasons led to their formation? The similarities between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels show the priority of the latter, but the analysis of the possible pre-canonical traditions in the Gospel of Peter needs to be examined in a close verse-by-verse study.

³²⁰ See below chapter 4.1. and also Foster 2010, 133–134.

³²¹ A similar example of combining the Gospel of Peter's dependence on the canonical gospels and later developments of the canonical traditions in the Gospel of Peter with a thesis of significant pre-canonical traditions preserved in the Gospel of Peter is represented by Koester's interpretation of the passion narrative in the Gospel of Peter. (Koester 1990, 216–231.)

2.3. Secondary oral dependence?

The above-discussed evidence supports the conclusion that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on the canonical gospels. This conclusion, however, does not explain why the Gospel of Peter is in some respects drastically different from them. The differences in the parallel narratives of the apocryphon and the canonical gospels need to be analysed in a detailed comparison of each passage, but in this chapter the focus is on the overall differences between them. If the author of the Gospel of Peter used written copies of the canonical gospels, why did he in some cases alter the sequence of his sources and, more importantly, why did he omit so many traditions that were included in his sources?

The differences in the sequence of the narrative and the various elements that are present in all or several canonical gospels, but are not included in the Gospel of Peter, have been used, most prominently by Brown, to argue in favour of the secondary oral dependence over the literary dependence on the canonical gospels. Brown claims that the author of the Gospel of Peter did not have written copies of the canonical gospels at his disposal when he composed his gospel, because a literary dependence does not explain the omissions of notable traditions of the canonical gospels or the differences in the sequence of episodes between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. Instead, the author relied on his memory of having read Matthew carefully in the past and heard preachers who were familiar with Luke and John. According to Brown, the omission of the traditions that are in one or several canonical gospels, as well as the changes and additions to the traditions of the canonical gospels by the author of the Gospel of Peter support this conclusion. Brown offers an extensive number of examples of these differences as an argument against the literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels.³²²

In the following, I will present Brown's arguments and offer a critical analysis of their significance. In the relatively short fragment of the Gospel of Peter a few changes to the sequence of the narrative and a few

³²² Brown 1994, 1333–1335. Brown also points out that there were not many copies of the gospels in the second century and most Christian knew them through public reading.

omissions of the canonical traditions would fall within the range of the redactional preferences of the author, but the extensive number of the suggested omissions demands an explanation. The presented omissions are not particularly significant in themselves, but the cumulative evidence presents a challenge to the thesis of the Gospel of Peter's literary dependence on the canonical gospels. Therefore, these elements are also discussed together before the comparison of parallel narratives in order to grasp their significance, a significance that would be lost in an examination of individual episodes.³²³

The sequence of the Gospel of Peter

One of Brown's arguments against a literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels is the difference in the sequence of the narratives. Although Brown admits that the main outline of the narratives is similar, he argues that individual episodes are not in the same order. He lists twenty-three items in the Gospel of Peter and notes that the sequence of the narrative "is not the same as that of any canonical Gospel".³²⁴ As an example of the differences he mentions that in Mark and Matthew the mocking and scourging are before the way of the cross. In the Gospel of Peter the order is reversed. He also adds that in the Gospel of Peter the vinegary-wine drink is offered to Jesus before his loud cry on the cross, while in Mark and Matthew the cry precedes the offer of the wine drink. Brown claims that it is difficult to imagine how the author of the Gospel of Peter produced the present sequence by combining episodes from Luke and John to Matthew's framework. Brown supports this conclusion by observing that Matthew's and Luke's sequence is much closer to Mark than the Gospel of Peter's sequence is to any of the canonical gospels.³²⁵

³²³ The source of the items in the list is found in Brown 1994, 1326–1327 who presents the omitted elements together to produce the cumulative evidence. Many of the omission, changes and differences are examined in the textual analyses in chapters 3-5. A thorough examination of every canonical tradition or expression that is not included in the Gospel of Peter goes beyond the scope of this chapter. The primary purpose of the investigation in this chapter is to explain the available text of the Gospel of Peter, not every detail that was not included in it.

³²⁴ Brown 1994, 1322.

³²⁵ Brown, 1994, 1321–1325.

Brown's examples of a reversed order can be explained as the outcome of the author's redaction. Crossan has argued that in the Gospel of Peter the mocking and abuse scene has been influenced by the scapegoat ritual. In this ritual the goat that is driven into the desert is abused along the way.³²⁶ Therefore, it is logical that Jesus, who is described as a scapegoat, is abused on the way to the cross, not before it. In the second example Brown does not take into account the fact that there are two separate times when Jesus drinks in the passion narratives of Mark and Matthew, but only one in the Gospel of Peter. The author of the Gospel of Peter combined these to create a closer connection with the Old Testament prophecy.³²⁷ Therefore, it was a logical necessity that in one way or another the sequence would be altered. There is also a problem in Brown's methodology. He compares the Gospel of Peter's difference in the sequence with the differences in the sequence of the synoptic gospels. However, as was noted above, Brown argues that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew Matthew, Luke and John. I will argue that the author of the Gospel of Peter used written copies of all four gospels. In either case, the author of the Gospel of Peter had to combine more or less different sequences into a single narrative. Matthew and Luke followed only one source in the passion narrative and made changes according to their redactional preferences. The combination of Matthean, Lucan and Johannine sequence of the passion narrative, not to mention the resurrection narrative, leads by necessity to greater diversity than following the Markan sequence as the only source. Therefore, the argument that the sequence of the Gospel of Peter does not follow that of any canonical gospels is methodologically problematic and fails to take into consideration the differences between the multiple sources.

Brown does not discuss further examples of the differences in the sequence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. His extensive table of items shows that Herod's role in the trial, Joseph's request for the body, separate references to the beginning and the end of the darkness, the activities of the disciples and the above-mentioned sequence of the guard at the tomb and the empty tomb narratives are the most notable differences in

³²⁶ See Crossan 1988, 117–139.

³²⁷ See below chapter 5.4.

the Gospel of Peter's sequence. These items, however, can also be explained as the outcome of the author's deliberate redaction. The Gospel of Peter has an increased anti-Jewish sentiment, as Brown notes,³²⁸ which explains why Herod has the primary role in sentencing Jesus to death.³²⁹ In the Gospel of Peter Joseph's request is placed at the end of the trial in order to provide more time for an honourable burial before sunset.³³⁰ In the synoptic gospels the beginning of darkness at the sixth hour and its endurance until the ninth hour are narrated together. In the Gospel of Peter the beginning of darkness is mentioned after the crucifixion at midday, but the re-appearance of the sun is narrated only after Jesus' death at the ninth hour. This redactional change improves the flow of the narrative.³³¹ The description of the disciples' activities provide an apologetic explanation for their flight and the author uses Peter as a first-person narrator in order to enhance the influence of his gospel.³³²

The removal of the empty tomb narrative from the middle of the guard at the tomb narrative, the former being placed after the latter, and the insertion of a resurrection narrative into the middle of the guard at the tomb narrative are the most extensive changes in the sequence of the Gospel of Peter. These differences in the sequence also provide the strongest evidence to support the argument that the author of the Gospel of Peter did not use written copies of the canonical gospels and was even familiar with a pre-canonical source. It seems unlikely that the author of the Gospel of Peter would have so thoroughly rewritten the guard at the tomb narrative if he had had a written copy of Matthew in front of him. However, the composition of the Gospel of Peter appears in a different light when it is taken into consideration that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew not only Matthew, but also Mark, Luke and John. In Matthew the empty tomb narrative is in the middle of the guard at the tomb narrative, but the other three gospels narrate the discovery of the empty tomb independently. The author of the Gospel of Peter had to choose which of the two versions he would follow and decided to present the empty tomb narrative as a separate scene. The placement of the

³²⁸ Brown 1987, 328–329.

³²⁹ See below chapter 5.1.

³³⁰ See below chapter 3.1.

³³¹ See below chapter 5.4.

³³² See below chapter 3.2.

empty tomb narrative after the guard at the tomb narrative serves various authorial purposes. In the canonical gospels women discover the empty tomb, and both Matthew and John describe how Jesus appeared to women at the tomb. In the Gospel of Peter the resurrection is described in detail and Jesus does not appear to the women who had followed him, but his enemies witness the resurrection. These changes in the guard at the tomb narrative offer support for the apology of the resurrection and explain why the narrative has been rewritten.³³³

Although there are some notable differences in the sequence of individual episodes in the Gospel of Peter, they support the thesis of a literary dependence on the canonical gospels. The author of the Gospel of Peter skilfully placed various elements into another context. The redaction indicates carefully designed improvements of the passion and resurrection narratives. These changes serve the apology of an honourable burial and the reality of the resurrection, as well as anti-Jewish polemic, which are characteristics of the author's redaction in the whole extant fragment of the Gospel of Peter. The sequence of the episodes in the Gospel of Peter does not require any other explanation than literary dependence on the canonical gospels and a careful redaction of the written sources. The insightful redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter instead demonstrates that he knew the canonical gospels well and most likely had access to written copies when he composed his gospel.

Omissions of notable traditions of the canonical gospels

The Gospel of Peter does not contain various traditions that are found in the parallel scenes of the canonical gospels. Brown argues that this supports the conclusion that the author of the Gospel of Peter relied on his memory rather than on written copies of the canonical gospels when he wrote his gospel. Brown lists several items of one or several of the canonical gospels that are not included in the Gospel of Peter. The items that are in all or several of the canonical gospels offer stronger evidence against the thesis of literary dependence on the canonical gospels, but the omissions of notable items of

³³³ See below chapter 4.1.

individual gospels also present a challenge to this theory. Brown presents the following items, which are included in several of the canonical gospels, but are not mentioned in the Gospel of Peter:³³⁴

Pilate's major role in the trial of Jesus and finding Jesus not guilty
Barabbas and the cries of the crowd to crucify Jesus
Carrying of the cross by Jesus and/or Simon of Cyrene
Several mockeries of Jesus hanging on the cross
Confession of Jesus by the centurion immediately after death
Women at the cross or looking from a distance; women at burial
Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene at tomb
Jesus appearing to disciples/Twelve in Jerusalem

These are important features of several of the canonical gospels and their omissions in the Gospel of Peter deserve careful consideration. However, a closer examination will demonstrate that the number and content of the omissions are not as impressive as Brown claims. Only two verses of the trial have been preserved and it is difficult to estimate Pilate's role in the trial. In these verses King Herod is responsible for condemning Jesus to death. In the non-extant material Pilate probably washed his hands as a sign of his innocence concerning Jesus's death.³³⁵ The resurrection narrative confirms Pilate's innocence to the death over Jesus in the Gospel of Peter where he pronounces his innocence over the blood of the Son of God (Gos. Pet. 11:46). In the Gospel of Peter Pilate has an important role in emphasizing Jesus's innocence. This indicates that Pilate had a notable role in the trial as well, but the fragmentary evidence forbids any firm conclusions on the matter.³³⁶ Therefore, the first item in Brown's list cannot be used as an example of the differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. The same observation applies to the omission of Barabbas and the cries of the crowd as well. The extant narrative begins after Pilate has washed his hands. This is followed by the refusal of the Jews to wash their hands and Herod hands Jesus over to the people (Gos. Pet. 1:1–1:2, 2:5b). In the canonical gospels Barabbas and the cries of the crowd are mentioned immediately before Pilate hands Jesus over to the soldiers (Mark 15:6–15 par. Matt. 27:15–26). If the

³³⁴ Brown 1994, 1333–1334.

³³⁵ See below chapter 5.1.

³³⁶ See below chapter 5.1.

author of the Gospel of Peter had followed the same sequence of events, these elements would have been mentioned in the Gospel of Peter right before the extant material begins. The Gospel of Peter has an anti-Jewish emphasis and at the end of the trial the Jews refuse to wash their hands (Gos. Pet. 1:1). It is unlikely that the author of the Gospel of Peter would have omitted the scene, which underlines the responsibility of the Jewish people for the death of Jesus. Nevertheless, it is impossible to know whether Barabbas and cries of the crowd could be found in the non-extant section of the Gospel of Peter. Therefore, the inclusion or exclusion of this tradition in the Gospel of Peter should not be used as evidence of the apocryphon's relationship to the canonical gospels.

The fragmentary nature of the evidence is also relevant in the examination of the last item in Brown's list. Moreover, the contradictions between the canonical gospels become apparent in the appearance narratives. In the Gospel of Peter the disciples return to their homes and go fishing (Gos. Pet. 14:58–14:60) before the Akhmîm fragment breaks off. Although it is not stated explicitly, this implies that the disciples have returned to Galilee and the first appearance occurs there, not in Jerusalem. In the canonical gospels the first appearances of Jesus are placed in Galilee in Mark 16:7 and Matthew 28:16–20, but in Jerusalem in Luke 24:36–53 and John 20:19–31. John 21:1–25 describes an appearance narrative at the Lake of Galilee, which seems to be a parallel to the appearance scene in the Gospel of Peter.³³⁷ If the author of the Gospel of Peter knew all four gospels, he had to choose whether to place the first appearance in Galilee or Jerusalem. Therefore, he had to omit one of the locations or describe several appearance narratives. The narrative breaks off before the appearance is described. It is impossible to know the content of that narrative or to know whether there was also an appearance in Jerusalem as well. The author may have preferred the appearance at the Lake of Galilee, because Peter, who is the first person narrator in the Gospel of Peter, has a notable role in this narrative and in the following dialogue with Jesus. However, all this is pure speculation. The fragmentary nature of the evidence of the Gospel of Peter excludes any firm conclusions of its appearance

³³⁷ See below chapter 3.2.

narrative and the contradictions in the appearance narratives between the canonical gospels create a necessity that at least some canonical appearance traditions had to be omitted or narrated differently. Therefore, the omission of Jesus appearing to the disciples in Jerusalem should not be included as an argument that the author of the Gospel of Peter did not have access to written copies of the canonical gospels.

The rest of the items in Brown's list have an extant parallel scene in the Gospel of Peter. The omissions of these items can be explained through the author's redaction. In the analysis of the empty tomb narrative I will argue that the author of the Gospel of Peter excluded the women as witnesses. Instead, he emphasized that Jesus appeared to the disciples without any news that the women had found the tomb empty and seen the Lord. The role of the women in forming the resurrection belief was prone to raise criticism in the social context of the second century, and a good case can be made that the author of the Gospel of Peter attempted to avoid this criticism.³³⁸ The omission of Jesus's appearance to Mary Magdalene (and other women) serves this apologetic motive in the second-century context. The same redaction explains why the author of the Gospel of Peter did not mention the women who were observing the crucifixion or the burial from a distance. Their role in the resurrection appearance in Jerusalem may have also led the author of the Gospel of Peter to prefer the appearance narrative in Galilee where the women are not mentioned.

In Mark 15:39 and Matthew 27:54 the centurion confesses Jesus as the Son of God immediately after his death. In the Gospel of Peter the centurion's confession appears in the resurrection (Gos. Pet. 11:45). The author of the Gospel of Peter had removed Roman soldiers from the passion narrative, but they have a prominent role in the guard at the tomb narrative. If the author wanted to preserve the magnificent confession of the centurion, he had to place it in a later context. The centurion's confession is not omitted, but relocated in a more suitable section of the narrative in the Gospel of Peter.³³⁹

The removal of Roman soldiers and their replacement with the Jewish people in the passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter also explains why

³³⁸ See below chapter 3.3.

³³⁹ See below chapter 6.1.

there are not several mockeries when Jesus is hanging on the cross. The most obvious outcome of this anti-Jewish redaction is that there is no mockery of the Roman soldiers at the cross in the Gospel of Peter. Moreover, in the canonical gospels those who passed by mocked Jesus (Mark 15:29, Matt. 27:39). In the Gospel of Peter this tradition does not appear. However, Jesus is mocked before the crucifixion by the Jewish people (Gos. Pet. 3:6–3:9). In the canonical gospels Roman soldiers mock and abuse Jesus before crucifying him (Mark 15:16–20, Matt. 27:27–31). Therefore, in the canonical gospels the mockery of the passers by adds a new group who insults Jesus. In the Gospel of Peter the mockery at the cross would have only repeated that the Jewish people mocked Jesus. The author of the Gospel of Peter also excluded the high priests, who have a prominent role in the canonical gospels, from the passion narrative and therefore their mockery does not appear in the Gospel of Peter.³⁴⁰ The third mockery at the cross is done by those who were crucified with Jesus (Mark 15:32, Matt. 27:44). Luke changed this scene to a dialogue where one of the thieves mocks Jesus, but the other rebukes him and Jesus promises salvation to the penitent thief (Luke 23:39–43). In the Gospel of Peter the tradition of the penitent thief is rewritten. The penitent thief's rebuke is directed at the Jewish crucifiers (Gos. Pet. 4:13) and this enhances the anti-Jewish character of the narrative.³⁴¹ The author's anti-Jewish redaction and the enhanced culpability of the Jewish people provides an explanation why the mockeries at the cross are omitted in the Gospel of Peter.

The tradition of carrying the cross on the way to Golgotha requires careful consideration. Why does the author of the Gospel of Peter not mention that Simon of Cyrene carried Jesus's cross (Mark 15:21; Matt. 27:32; Luke 23:26)? One possible explanation is that the Gospel of Peter's author preferred the version of the fourth gospel to the synoptic gospels. John does not mention Simon of Cyrene, but emphasizes that Jesus carried the cross himself (John 19:17). This emphasis is in line with John's portrayal of the Sovereign Jesus who is in charge of his own passion. However, this explanation is less likely, because the Gospel of Peter does not include the

³⁴⁰ See below chapter 4.2.

³⁴¹ See below chapter 5.3.

tradition that Jesus carried his cross a part (synoptics) or all the way (John) to Golgotha (see below).

A more probable motive for the author of the Gospel of Peter to reject the synoptic tradition was its connection to the practices of Roman soldiers. In the provinces they often used or misused their right to confiscate material goods or demanded services from the local people. The technical term for this practice was *angareia* (ἀγγαρεία, ἀγγαρεύω). In Mark's and Matthew's description Roman soldiers forced Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross and both use this technical term (ἀγγαρεύουσιν). The knowledge of *angareia* seems to have influenced Luke's description of the same incident. Luke does not explicitly mention that the Roman soldiers forced Simon to carry the cross. He creates the impression that it was done by the high priests, the elders and the people.³⁴² In accordance with this redaction, Luke omitted the use of the technical term ἀγγαρεύω and used the more general ἐπιλαβόμενοι. With this change of terminology Luke attempted to avoid the unrealistic description of Jewish leaders and people practising *angareia* against one of their own people for no obvious reason. Although the change of vocabulary avoids a direct connection between the actions of the Jews and the practice of *angareia*, the narrative still implies a Roman practice. This in turn gives the impression that the crucifiers in Luke were nevertheless Roman soldiers.

The Gospel of Peter does not describe the involvement of Roman soldiers in the crucifixion. Instead, the author of the Gospel of Peter explicated and emphasized the guilt of the Jewish people. His desire to absolve the Romans and blame the Jews for the death of Jesus explains why the tradition that Simon of Cyrene carried the cross was not included in the apocryphal gospel. Mark's and Matthew's description of Simon of Cyrene is a clear example of Roman soldiers practising *angareia*. Luke does not explicitly mention Roman soldiers or use the technical term *angareia*, but the mere act of forcing Simon to carry the cross implies the Roman practice. The tradition of Simon of Cyrene carrying Jesus's cross referred either explicitly (Mark and Matthew) or implicitly (Luke) to the practice of Roman soldiers. The author of

³⁴² For a detailed discussion of the Roman and Jewish responsibility in Luke see below chapter 5.2.

the Gospel of Peter excluded their involvement in the crucifixion of Jesus. Therefore, the exclusion of this tradition is in line with the author's anti-Jewish redaction of the passion narrative. The same redaction may explain why the author of the Gospel of Peter did not include the tradition of Jesus carrying his cross. The canonical tradition that Jesus carried his own cross to the site of the crucifixion implied the Roman practice and by extension Roman crucifiers. The author of the Gospel of Peter had a motive to exclude the tradition of carrying the cross to the place of crucifixion, because he presented the Jewish people as Jesus's crucifiers.³⁴³

The omission of the tradition that Jesus and Simon of Cyrene carried the cross does not indicate that the author of the Gospel of Peter had a vague and incomplete understanding of the canonical gospels. The omission of this tradition demonstrates that the author was well aware how to create a narrative that served his purpose. The exclusion of this tradition, therefore, is not a sign of a lack of detailed knowledge of the canonical gospels, but of a deliberate redaction of their content to create an alternative version of the passion narrative. This kind of profound understanding of the passion narrative, even omitting canonical traditions, indicates that the author of the Gospel of Peter worked with the written copies of the canonical gospels.

Brown also presents extensive lists of items that are found in one of the canonical gospels, but not in the Gospel of Peter to support his thesis of secondary oral dependence on the canonical gospels. Brown lists the following items from Matthew: "the dream of Pilate's wife", "His blood be on us and on our children", "rocks split, tombs opened, many of the fallen-asleep holy ones raised and made visible to Jerusalemites, Jesus appearance to women at the tomb."³⁴⁴ Again, the dream of Pilate's wife and the infamous "His blood on us and on our children" – like the above-mentioned Barabbas scene as a whole – could have been in the non-extant narrative of the Gospel of Peter.³⁴⁵ The

³⁴³ An alternative explanation to the exclusion of the tradition of carrying of the cross may have been that the author of the Gospel of Peter rewrote the mocking and abuse scene in the light of the scapegoat ritual. The carrying of the cross did not fit together with the mocking and abuse along the way to the site of crucifixion.

³⁴⁴ Brown 1994, 1329.

³⁴⁵ In Matthew 27:24–25 Pilate washes his hands and declares his innocence to which the crowd answer "His blood be on us and on our children". In the Gospel of Peter Pilate washes his hands at the end of the trial and later declares his innocence to the blood of the Son of God. Does this imply that there was a similar shout from the crowd in the Gospel of Peter? This would have been in line with the author's anti-

exclusion of Jesus's appearance to women at the tomb is a part of the author's redaction to direct the appearances to the disciples instead of the women. The resurrection of the holy ones after the death of Jesus (Matt. 27:52–53) is one of the most puzzling scenes in Matthew's gospel and its problematic nature is seen in the awkward sequence of their resurrection after Jesus's death, but their appearance to the Jerusalemites only after Jesus's resurrection. However, a more emphatic motive for excluding this tradition in the Gospel of Peter can be provided. The author of the Gospel of Peter also omitted Jesus's words to the penitent thief that today he would be in paradise with Jesus (Luke 23:43). In the Gospel of Peter 10:39–10:42 a spectacular resurrection is depicted in detail. Jesus emerges from the tomb and a voice from heaven asks have you preached to the fallen-asleep? This tradition explains why the tradition of the immediate ascent to heaven and the resurrection of the holy ones had to be excluded in the Gospel of Peter. It would have been awkward if Jesus had promised to the penitent thief to be in paradise with him on Friday when his resurrection on Sunday is described in detail or if the holy ones had risen immediately after Jesus's death only to descend to Hades again to hear the preaching of the Son of God. Therefore, the exclusion of Matthew 27:51–53 can be explained as a conscious and consistent redaction of the Gospel of Peter's author, who attempts to solve the contradictions in the gospel tradition.

Brown notes that Luke and the Gospel of Peter share several items, but these items are described very differently: Herod has the principal role in the trial; Herod is already a friend of Pilate; the penitent thief addresses the Jews, but not the other wrongdoer. The Lucan items that are not present in the Gospel of Peter at all include Jesus's words to the daughters of Jerusalem and the three sayings on the cross, the eclipse, the women's purchase of spices and myrrh, their resting on the Sabbath and the resurrection appearance of Luke.³⁴⁶ The list of items is much more extensive than the list of items that are present in Matthew, but similar explanations can be given to these differences as well. In the Gospel of Peter Herod, and Pilate

Jewish tendency. If one were to argue for the inclusion of this tradition in the non-extant section of the narrative, a good circumstantial case could be built up to support a positive conclusion. However, methodologically the approach does not have enough support to reach either conclusion.

³⁴⁶ Brown 1994, 1330.

are friends at the end of the trial, but it is impossible to tell whether this friendship began at some stage of the trial or had been formed earlier. Herod's role in the trial can be explained as a part of the author's anti-Jewish redaction.³⁴⁷ The same redactional tendency explains why the penitent thief rebukes the Jews, but not the other wrongdoer.³⁴⁸ This explanation can be applied to the exclusion of Jesus's address to the daughters of Jerusalem. In the Gospel of Peter the destruction of Jerusalem is an explicit punishment for the murder of Jesus (Gos. Pet. 7:25).³⁴⁹ The friendly relationship between Jesus and the women of Jerusalem is in tension with the anti-Jewish redaction of the apocryphal gospel. The anti-Jewish redaction provides an explanation for the omission of Jesus' words on the cross. In Luke Jesus asks forgiveness to his crucifiers, but in the Gospel of Peter such benevolence towards the Jewish crucifiers is unimaginable. The anti-Jewish redaction also explains the omission of Jesus's words to the penitent thief, which was discussed earlier. The third saying on the cross in Luke are Jesus's final words before his death. Here, the author simply had to choose from three different sayings. In this instance, he preferred to follow Mark and Matthew rather than Luke or John. The author of the Gospel of Peter also followed Mark and Matthew in the description of the darkness rather than Luke's eclipse. In the analysis of the empty tomb narrative it will be argued that the detail that women bought spices and myrrh was removed because the author wanted to provide a more realistic motive for the women to go the tomb than the anointing of the body on the third day.³⁵⁰ Moreover, the author of the Gospel of Peter distanced his audience from the feasts and commandments of the Law, and he preferred the Lord's Day over the Sabbath.³⁵¹ Therefore, it is natural that he omitted the Lucan tradition that the women rested on the Sabbath. The resurrection appearances were discussed above and I argued that the author of the Gospel of Peter chose from the various contradictory narratives the one where Peter had the most prominent role.

³⁴⁷ See below chapter 5.1.

³⁴⁸ See below chapter 5.3.

³⁴⁹ See below chapter 5.5.

³⁵⁰ See below chapter 3.3.

³⁵¹ See below chapter 5.1. and 5.4.

Brown provides similar examples of Johannine traditions that are not included in the Gospel of Peter. These include the inside-outside of the praetorium pattern of the trial (John 18:28–19:16a) and the chiasmic structure of the crucifixion-burial account as well as Jesus’s mother with the beloved disciple, the lance stabbing his side and Nicodemus with the myrrh and aloes.³⁵² It is not surprising that the carefully constructed inside-outside of the praetorium pattern does not appear in the two preserved verses of the trial in the Gospel of Peter. Furthermore, how could the author have retained the chiasmic structure of John’s crucifixion-burial scene when, as Brown himself concludes,³⁵³ the author followed primarily Matthew’s sequence? Not much can be made of the fact that the author preferred the synoptic versions of many scenes in the passion narrative. The author used Peter as the first person narrator of his gospel and therefore it is likely that he did rely on the Johannine tradition of the beloved disciple. The lance stabbing may have been omitted, because it was done by a Roman soldier. Instead, the Gospel of Peter describes piercing with a reed.³⁵⁴ The author of the Gospel of Peter could have omitted Nicodemus, because in John he is a Pharisee and a member of the council. In the Gospel of Peter there are no positive characters among the Jewish leadership. Any hint that Joseph was a member of the council is omitted in the Gospel of Peter. The involvement of Nicodemus would have shattered the clear-cut division between Jesus and the Jewish leadership. Moreover, the overwhelming amount of myrrh and aloes did not fit together with the limited amount of time for the burial, which forced the author of the Gospel of Peter to place Joseph’s request at an earlier time.³⁵⁵ The omissions of the traditions that are found in the fourth gospel are also consistent and in line with the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter.

Conclusion

There are several items in the canonical gospels that are not included in the Gospel of Peter; their omissions, however, can be explained as deliberate

³⁵² Brown 1994, 1331.

³⁵³ Brown 1994, 1322.

³⁵⁴ See below chapter 5.2.

³⁵⁵ See below chapter 3.1.

authorial choices. Methodologically, it is problematic that scholars have claimed special knowledge about what preceded in the Gospel of Peter before the extant material begins.³⁵⁶ In some cases it can be argued convincingly what was or was not in the non-extant narrative, for example, the hand washing of Pilate, but such an analysis is not offered for the various items that were listed above. The number of differences is also increased by referring to the same or similar items in the list of several gospels and again in the lists of individual gospels, for example Jesus' appearance to women (Matthew) and Herod's role in the trial (Luke). It is also methodologically problematic to simply list the items without providing detailed discussions to support the argument. The changes in the sequence and the content of the narrative, including the omission of several notable traditions, show a consistent and deliberate redaction of the Gospel of Peter's author. Therefore, the differences in the sequence and content do not indicate that he worked with the memory of having read the canonical gospels or knew of their traditions, but rather that he studied carefully the written copies of the canonical gospels when he composed his own gospel.

2.4. The Gospel of Peter, the synoptic gospels, and Tatian's Diatessaron

I have argued above that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on the canonical gospels. The shared items between them strongly support this conclusion. The differences in the sequence and omissions of canonical traditions can be explained as the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. The third significant argument against a literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels has been the lack of extensive verbal agreements. Brown compares the Gospel of Peter to the prominent examples of literary dependence in the gospel literature, Matthew's and Luke's use of

³⁵⁶ Brown is by no means alone in claiming to have knowledge what was or was not in the non-extant section of the Gospel of Peter. Koester argues that the Gospel of Peter is earlier than the canonical gospels because in the former the mocking scene has not yet been split into several different accounts. (Koester 1990, 227.) How does Koester know that there was not more than one trial or that some form of mockery was not part of the interrogation in the non-extant section of the Gospel of Peter? If we possessed fragmented passion narratives from the end of the trial before Pilate, the canonical gospels would all have only one mockery scene

Mark and Q in the first century, and Tatian's use of the four gospels in the second century, which provide examples of literary dependence. According to the two-source hypothesis, Matthew and Luke independently used Mark and Q as their sources. Brown points out that Matthew and Luke reproduced significant proportions of Mark verbatim or with minor changes in style or content. Similarly, Tatian's Diatessaron provides evidence of direct quoting from the four gospels. Tatian harmonized the four gospels into a single narrative by preserving most of the vocabulary of his sources. The number of verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels is far less extensive than that found between the synoptic gospels. Similarly, the Gospel of Peter does not reproduce the canonical gospels in verbatim like Tatian's Diatessaron.³⁵⁷ In the Gospel of Peter similar extensive verbal agreements with the canonical gospel are found in only a few scattered verses. Brown argues that this evidence supports secondary oral dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels,³⁵⁸ and disputes the Gospel of Peter's literary dependence because the lack of verbal agreements cannot be explained through freedom in textual transmission or redaction of written copies. If the Gospel of Peter's author used written copies of the canonical gospels, he would have produced more extensive verbal agreements similar to those that are found in the synoptic gospels and the Diatessaron. Therefore, the author's knowledge of the canonical gospels "rested on having heard or once having read them".³⁵⁹

A detailed comparison of the shared vocabulary between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospel cannot be carried out in the present context and it is postponed to the analysis of each section of the apocryphal gospel. In this chapter I will argue that Brown's comparison does not provide a methodologically accurate approach to the problem at hand. The relationship between the synoptic gospels and the dependence of Tatian's Diatessaron on the four gospels are not examples that explain the Gospel of Peter's relationship with the canonical gospels. In the following I will analyse why the comparisons that Brown presents to support his thesis are not as

³⁵⁷ Brown 1987, 333. The notable exceptions are Matt. 27:64 par. Gos. Pet. 8:30 and Mark 16:3–4 par. Gos. Pet. 12:53–54.

³⁵⁸ Brown 1987, 333, 335; Brown 1994, 1334.

³⁵⁹ Brown 1987, 339.

methodologically accurate as they initially appear. Although the synoptic gospels and Tatian's Diatessaron share notable similarities in producing extensive verbal agreements with their sources, they do not provide identical cases of literary dependence. Therefore, both are compared to the Gospel of Peter individually.

The Synoptic gospels and the Gospel of Peter

It is undisputed that the verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels are significantly less impressive than between the literarily dependent synoptic gospels. The argument that this supports the Gospel of Peter's secondary oral dependence over literary dependence on the canonical gospels, however, fails to take into consideration that the compared examples have notable differences. Mark and Q are usually dated a few years before or after 70 AD and Matthew's and Luke's use of them to a decade or two later. Moreover, for the most part Mark and Q did not overlap each other. The Gospel of Peter's relationship to the canonical gospels is significantly different in these two crucial aspects. First, the canonical gospels were composed notably earlier than the Gospel of Peter. Only a few decades separated Matthew and Luke from Mark and Q, but the Gospel of Peter was written at least half a century, possibly even a century later than Mark.³⁶⁰ The development of Christian traditions and changes in the social situation over time prompted greater pressure to redact the sources. It is reasonable to assume that the passing of time contributed to a greater discrepancy between the canonical gospels and the Gospel of Peter. Second, the use of Mark and Q as the sources of the narrative before the passion narrative differs from the use of the four gospels as sources for the passion and resurrection narratives. All four gospels have notable differences and similarities between them within these sections of the narrative. They use different vocabulary in the parallel scenes and every gospel has material that is not found in the other gospels, and the traditions that are unique to each gospel are often in tension with the other gospels. Especially the resurrection narratives are so contradictory that

³⁶⁰ See above chapter 2.4.

their harmonization creates problems that are not faced in using Mark and Q as the primary sources.³⁶¹ A gospel that combines four overlapping and contradictory narratives in a much later context is bound to produce more profound changes, omission and additions than what we find in the synoptic gospels. The writing processes are so different that a simple one-to-one comparison of the gospels is not methodologically accurate. The evidence requires a more careful analysis to support the argument that the author of the Gospel of Peter did not possess written copies of the canonical gospels.

Tatian's Diatessaron and the Gospel of Peter

Tatian's Diatessaron is Brown's second prominent example of a literary dependence between the gospels. In the Diatessaron, most of the canonical material has been reproduced with a striking similarity, while the Gospel of Peter has very few exact verbal agreements with the canonical gospels. The Diatessaron provides a better comparison with the Gospel of Peter than the synoptic gospels. The Gospel of Peter and the Diatessaron were probably written chronologically and were possibly also geographically close to each other. Petersen argues convincingly that the Diatessaron was composed in the 170's in Syria.³⁶² This comparison avoids the difference in chronological distance between the composition of the sources and the author's use of them. Tatian and the author of the Gospel of Peter also combined traditions from the four canonical gospels. The process of composition was more similar between the Gospel of Peter and the Diatessaron than between the Gospel of Peter and the synoptic gospels. Therefore, the comparison between the Gospel of Peter's and Tatian's use of the four gospels is methodologically more accurate than a similar comparison between the Gospel of Peter and the synoptic gospels. While this comparison is not without merit, Brown has not considered all of the aspects that are involved.

The fact that Tatian and the author of the Gospel of Peter wrote their gospels at a roughly similar time and place and used the four gospels as their sources differently tells us little of their access to written copies during

³⁶¹ For Tatian's solution to this problem see below.

³⁶² Petersen 1994, 426–432.

the time of the composition of their gospel. The differences instead indicate different approaches to the sources. Tatian obviously held the wording and content of the four gospels in high esteem. His primary purpose was to harmonize the four gospels. In other words, the problem was the existence of various gospels. Tatian's purpose was to create one *εὐαγγέλιον*. Although Tatian's purpose seems to have been opposite, his gospel harmony implies the emerging fourfold gospel canon. The four gospels became increasingly acknowledged as Holy Scripture towards the end of the second century. Irenaeus' witness of the fourfold testimony is an explicit example of this, although the Diatessaron enjoyed enormous popularity in the Eastern church.³⁶³ By contrast, the author of the Gospel of Peter shows greater freedom in composing his gospels. A combination of elements from all four gospels naturally led to some harmonizing between them, but the freedom to change many aspects of the wording and the content indicates that the author had a different motive for composing his gospel. At least part of the differences in the use of the four gospels can be explained through a different regard for the gospels that both authors knew. The free use of the source material in the Gospel of Peter and the more pietistic preservation of the original wording in Tatian's Diatessaron might rather reflect the difference in the way these author regarded their sources.

The author's regard for the four gospels is a secondary explanation of the redactional interest of the authors. Tatian's gospel harmony shows that he wanted to combine the four gospels and remain faithful to their wording and content. In the case of the Gospel of Peter the opposite seems to have been the case. In this study it is argued that the author of the Gospel of Peter wanted to refute criticism levelled against the canonical gospels. This led him to thoroughly rewrite the passion and resurrection narratives. The different motives in writing explain the different redactional approaches to the same source material. The Diatessaron attempts to harmonize the four canonical gospels, while the Gospel of Peter attempts to rewrite their content. The purpose of the gospels is fundamentally different. The different purposes of the authors, not the difference in the use of written sources, explain the

³⁶³ Petersen 1994, 432–433.

different use of their sources. Therefore, Tatian's Diatessaron is not a suitable example to explain the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels.

Another aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is the nature of the harmonized passage. The harmony of the resurrection narratives and the rest of the gospel material are very different in nature. Theodore Bar Koni, Dionysius Bar Salibi and Manuscript Vatican Syr. 154 relate slightly different versions of a tradition that Tatian gave up his work when he reached the resurrection narratives. Petersen, for example, argues that Tatian gave up harmonizing when he reached the resurrection narratives and presented them *seriatim*, but such statements are not necessarily historically accurate.³⁶⁴ Be that as it may, the different versions exemplify the unique difficulty in harmonizing the resurrection narratives. A particularly good example is the empty tomb narrative. Petersen described Tatian's harmony of the empty tomb narrative as "an almost farcical succession of parties approaching the tomb, each of which meets a different divine messenger(s)".³⁶⁵ The attempt to avoid this "farcical" narrative provides an explanation why the author of the Gospel of Peter preferred to state that Mary Magdalene and her friends went to the tomb (Gos. Pet. 12:50). This is simply another way of harmonizing the contradictory lists of women who found the empty tomb on Sunday.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed the overall content and sequence of the Gospel of Peter, the examination showing that the Gospel of Peter's author knew the canonical gospels. In a relatively short section of the narrative the Gospel of Peter contains various traditions that are found in only one of the canonical gospels. These are present consistently throughout the extant fragment and it is very difficult to reconstruct an earlier source embedded within the Gospel of Peter that does not contain these traditions, which support the priority of the canonical gospels. Crossan's failure to provide a convincing explanation for

³⁶⁴ Petersen 1994, 51, 60, 62.

³⁶⁵ Petersen 1994, 398.

this evidence underlines the difficulties involved in the opposite thesis. I have also examined the argument that the differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels indicate that the author of the Gospel of Peter did not have access to written copies of the canonical gospels. I argued that the differences in the sequence of the gospels and the changes and omission of the traditions can be explained as redactional preferences of the Gospel of Peter's author. The changes and omission to the content and sequence of the canonical gospels demonstrate a careful and consistent redaction of the author. There are many differences, changes and omission that were not addressed in this chapter. Many of them, as well as the more detailed examination of the vocabulary, are discussed in the analysis of the Gospel of Peter. The analysis of the apocryphal gospel will demonstrate that the shared vocabulary also supports a literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. In this chapter I argued that the extensive verbal agreements between gospels that have a literary dependence – the synoptic gospels and the Diatessaron – do not demonstrate that a literary dependence does not exist between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. The purpose of the Gospel of Peter was to thoroughly rewrite the passion and resurrection narratives. Therefore, the author did not preserve the vocabulary and content of the sources. The synoptic gospels and the Diatessaron preserve the vocabulary and content of their sources, because their primary purpose was to combine and harmonize existing sources.

3. The Burial, the disciples' activities and the empty tomb

3.1. Introduction

The Akhmîm fragment of the Gospel of Peter mainly consists of the passion (Gos. Pet. 1:1–1:2, 2:5b–6:22) and the resurrection narratives (Gos. Pet. 8:28–11:49). These sections of the narrative have also attracted most attention in scholarship on the apocryphon. Scholars who have argued that the Gospel of Peter contains traditions that are older than the canonical gospels have focused primarily on these sections of the extant fragment. The interpretations of anti-Judaism and the purpose of the Gospel of Peter have also been formed predominantly in the light of its passion and resurrection narratives. The Gospel of Peter, however, also contains pericopes of the burial (Gos. Pet. 2:3–2:5a, 6:23–6:24), the disciples' activities (Gos. Pet. 7:26–7:27, 14:58–14:60), and the empty tomb (Gos. Pet. 12:50–13:57). The description of the disciples' activities between the death and appearance of Jesus have been widely regarded as a secondary expansion of the gospel tradition. In particular, the use of Peter as a first-person narrator has been interpreted as a sign of a later date of composition. The burial and the empty tomb narratives of the Gospel of Peter have apparent similarities with the canonical gospels. They contain crucial evidence of the composition of the Gospel of Peter and especially its relationship with Mark. In these pericopes the Gospel of Peter shares several extensive verbal agreements with Mark 15:43–16:8. The relationship between the Gospel of Peter and Mark is largely determined by the analysis of these sections of the narrative. An analysis of these pericopes also provides insights into the author's redaction.

The analyses of the burial and empty tomb narratives of the Gospel of Peter have produced diverging interpretations of their relationship with the canonical gospels, but it is intriguing that the usual divisions between scholars are not upheld in the discussion of these pericopes.³⁶⁶ Crossan argues that in the second century both these pericopes were inserted into the original

³⁶⁶ See also Henderson 2011, 197.

passion and resurrection narrative. The insertion included material that is dependent on the canonical gospels and redactional verses that harmonize the canonical and non-canonical material. Crossan considers that this harmonization between conflicting traditions is crucial for his thesis.³⁶⁷ Schaeffer criticizes Crossan's thesis of the composition of the Gospel of Peter and argues against literary dependence between these narratives.³⁶⁸ Brown concludes that the evidence does not support a dependence between Mark and the Gospel of Peter.³⁶⁹ Koester and Dewey argue that the Gospel of Peter is not dependent on the burial and empty tomb narratives of the canonical gospels. Instead the author of the Gospel of Peter had access to pre-canonical traditions that were known to both Mark and John.³⁷⁰ Foster, however, concludes that there are significant verbal agreements between Mark and that the Gospel of Peter and the evidence supports literary dependence on the empty tomb narratives.³⁷¹

I begin the analysis of the Gospel of Peter by examining the burial, the disciples' activities and the empty tomb narratives. I examine the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels in these pericopes. I argue that the verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter and Mark in the burial and empty tomb narratives support a literary dependence between the two gospels. I also examine the development of the traditions of the burial, the disciples, and the empty tomb. In a redaction critical analysis, I examine how the author of the Gospel of Peter developed the traditions of the canonical gospels. I will argue that the notable differences that exist between the Gospel of Peter and canonical gospels in these sections of the narrative are a result of the deliberate redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. The redaction critical study of these narratives provides an explanation of the way the author of the Gospel of Peter rewrites the traditions of his sources. In the later chapters I argue that the passion and resurrection narratives of the Gospel of Peter consistently demonstrate similar redactional features and were written by the same author. I agree with Crossan that contradictory

³⁶⁷ Crossan 1988, 20–21.

³⁶⁸ Schaeffer 1995, 121–135, 138–140, 170–179.

³⁶⁹ Brown 1994, 1328.

³⁷⁰ Koester 1990, 231; Dewey 1990, 106.

³⁷¹ Foster 2010, 233–245, 459–480, 485–496.

traditions are harmonized in the Gospel of Peter. However, I argue that these traditions, which are dependent on the canonical gospels, represent the earliest traditions and that the non-canonical traditions are second-century expansions to the passion narrative.

3.2. The Burial

2:3 Ἰσθῆκει δὲ ἐκεῖ Ἰωσήφ, ὁ φίλος Πειλάτου καὶ τοῦ Κυρίου, καὶ εἰδὼς ὅτι σταυρῶσκειν αὐτὸν μέλλουσιν ἦλθεν πρὸς τὸν Πειλάτον καὶ ᾔτησε τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Κυρίου πρὸς ταφὴν. 2:4 Καὶ ὁ Πειλάτος πέμψας πρὸς Ἡρώδην ᾔτησεν αὐτοῦ τὸ σῶμα· 2:5a καὶ ὁ Ἡρώδης ἔφη· Ἀδελφε Πειλᾶτε, εἰ καὶ μὴ τις αὐτὸν ᾔτῃκει, ἡμεῖς αὐτὸν ἐθάπτομεν, ἐπεὶ καὶ σάββατον ἐπιφώσκει. Γέγραπται γὰρ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ ἥλιον μὴ δοῦναι ἐπὶ πεφονευμένῳ.

6:23 Ἐχάρησαν δὲ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ δεδώκασι τῷ Ἰωσήφ τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ ἵνα αὐτὸ θάψῃ, ἐπειδὴ θεασάμενος ἦν ὅσα ἀγαθὰ ἐποίησεν. 6:24 Λαβὼν δὲ τὸν Κύριον ἔλουσε καὶ εἴλησε σινδόνι καὶ εἰσήγαγεν εἰς ἴδιον τάφον καλοῦμενον κήπον Ἰωσήφ.

2:3 And there was Joseph, a friend of Pilate and of the Lord and he realized that they were about to crucify him. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of the Lord for burial. 2:4 And Pilate sent [a word] to Herod and asked for his body. 2:5 And Herod said: “Brother Pilate, even if no one had asked for him, we would have buried him, because the Sabbath is also dawning. For it is written in the law, ‘the sun should not set on a man that has been murdered’.” 6:23 And the Jews rejoiced and gave his body to Joseph that he would bury it, because he had seen how much good he had done. 6:24 He took the Lord, washed him, wrapped him in linen and placed him inside his own tomb which is called Joseph’s garden.

The description of the burial of Jesus in the Gospel of Peter (2:3–2:5a, 6:23–6:24) is in many regards characteristic of the preserved fragment. It contains striking similarities and profound differences with the parallel scenes of the canonical gospels (Mark 15:42–47; Matt. 27:57–61; Luke 23:50–55; John 19:38–42). In the Gospel of Peter, Joseph, who is identified as a friend of the Lord, asks for his body from Pilate for burial (Gos. Pet. 2:3). Joseph washes the body and wraps it in linen before burying the Lord in his own garden tomb (Gos. Pet. 6:24). The request and burial by Joseph closely resemble the description of the synoptic gospels. However, the Gospel of Peter also moves well beyond what is described in the canonical gospels. In the Gospel of Peter the description of the burial is divided into two distinctive episodes. Joseph’s

request is placed at the end of the trial and it does not immediately precede the burial. Moreover, in the Gospel of Peter, King Herod is in charge of the trial and Pilate must ask for the body of the Lord from him (Gos. Pet. 2:4). In his response to Pilate, Herod states that we, i.e. he and the others involved in the crucifixion, would have buried Jesus even if no one had asked for the body, because the Scriptures command that a murdered man should be buried before sunset (Gos. Pet. 2:5a). The trial ends when Herod hands Jesus over to the Jewish people to be crucified (Gos. Pet. 2:5b). After the death of Jesus the Jews rejoice, because the darkness, which has caused them anxiety (Gos. Pet. 5:15), has ended at the ninth hour (Gos. Pet. 6:22–6:23a) and there is still enough time to fulfil the commandment of the law to bury the crucified body before sunset. The Jews hand the body of the Lord over to Joseph (Gos. Pet. 6:23b). The role of Herod and the Jewish people in Jesus's burial are examples of traditions that are present in the Gospel of Peter but are not found in any of the canonical gospels.

Literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and Mark?

The burial narrative reflects the diverse theories of the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. Crossan argues that verses 2:3–5a and 6:23–64 contain a summary of the burial pericopes of the canonical gospels. These verses also harmonize the canonical tradition of burial by friends under the control of Pilate with the earlier *Cross Gospel*, which presumed that Jesus was buried by his enemies out of observance of the law.³⁷² Schaeffer criticizes Crossan's thesis of an early burial tradition. Moreover, in a case study, Schaeffer compares verse 6:24 to the canonical parallels and argues that there is not enough evidence of literary dependence.³⁷³ Koester and Dewey claim that the burial account in the Gospel of Peter is independent of the canonical gospels.³⁷⁴ Foster argues that the

³⁷² Crossan 1988, 21–23.

³⁷³ Schaeffer 1995, 94–100, 121–125.

³⁷⁴ Koester 1990, 231; Dewey 1990, 106.

Gospel of Peter is dependent on the canonical gospels and he analyses how the burial tradition is developed in the Gospel of Peter.³⁷⁵

Schaeffer argues against a literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels by examining selected case studies of the most extensive verbal agreements between them. In the first of her case studies she compares the description of the burial in the Gospel of Peter verse 6:24 with all four canonical gospels. She notes that the only shared word between John and the Gospel of Peter in the burial pericope is garden (κῆπος). The Gospel of Peter shares only the word σινδόν with the synoptic gospels, the verb εἶλησε with Mark 15:46 and the verb λαβὼν with Matthew 27:59. Schaeffer argues that these elements are all necessary to narrate the burial and concludes that the lack of significant verbal agreements demonstrates that there is not a literary dependence between the burial narratives of the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels.³⁷⁶

Schaeffer's analysis is limited to the exact verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter 6:24 and the parallel verses of the canonical gospels. However, the decision to focus solely on verse 6:24 is methodologically questionable. A more balanced examination requires that one takes into consideration not only verse 6:24, but also verse 2:3, which contains more extensive verbal agreements with the burial pericopes of the canonical gospels. In particular verses 2:3b and 6:24a have intriguing verbal agreements with Mark 15:43 and 15:46.³⁷⁷

εἰσηλθεν πρὸς τὸν Πιλάτον καὶ ἡτήσατο τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ
καθελὼν αὐτὸν ἐνείλησεν τῇ σινδόνι (Mark 15:43, 15:46)

ἦλθεν πρὸς τὸν Πειλάτον καὶ ἥτησε τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Κυρίου πρὸς ταφήν
Λαβὼν δὲ τὸν Κύριον ἔλουσε καὶ εἶλησε σινδόνι (Gos. Pet. 2:3b, 6:24a)

These verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter and Mark are striking as they stand. A closer analysis of the minor differences demonstrates that they are a result of the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. In Mark Joseph arrives suddenly after the death of Jesus and gathers his courage to

³⁷⁵ Foster 2010, 233–245, 342–347.

³⁷⁶ Schaeffer 1995, 121–125.

³⁷⁷ See Foster 2010, 239–240, 345–346.

address Pilate (Mark 15:43). The compound form εἰσῆλθεν is appropriate in Mark's narrative context where Joseph presumably goes to meet the prefect at his residence. In the Gospel of Peter, however, Joseph is already present in the same location as Pilate (Ἰστῆκει δὲ ἐκεῖ Ἰωσήφ).³⁷⁸ Therefore, the simple form ἦλθεν is preferred by the Gospel of Peter's author. The sentence continues with πρὸς τὸν Πειλᾶτον καὶ in both gospels. In both gospels Joseph requests the body (τὸ σῶμα), but Mark has an aorist form ἠτίσαστο while the Gospel of Peter has an imperfect form ἤτησε. Another difference in verse 2:3b is that Mark has the proper name Jesus, while the Gospel of Peter has the title Lord. This change reflects the typical redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. The proper name Jesus does not appear in the Akhmîm fragment of the Gospel of Peter. The author consistently refers to Jesus with the title ὁ Κυρίος. In this verse the manuscript has the title in the nomen sacrum form κυ.³⁷⁹ The author of the Gospel of Peter also adds that Joseph requested the body of the Lord *for burial* (πρὸς ταφήν). This explication was probably inserted, because Joseph's request precedes the crucifixion and therefore the author underlines that the body will be handed over to Joseph only after the death of the Lord.³⁸⁰

Similar redactional changes also explain the minor differences between the Gospel of Peter 6:24a and Mark 15:46. In Mark, Joseph takes the body of Jesus down from the cross (καθελὼν). In the Gospel of Peter the Jews have already taken the body down from the cross (Gos. Pet. 6:21). Therefore, λαβὼν is a more appropriate choice in the narrative context of the Gospel of Peter.³⁸¹ Another minor difference is the pronoun αὐτὸν in Mark, while the author of the Gospel of Peter again prefers the title Κύριον. The Gospel of Peter includes a tradition that Joseph washed (ἔλουσε) the body of the Lord, which underlines Joseph's devotion to Jesus, and the body receives an honourable characteristic.³⁸² The washing of the body before burial was an

³⁷⁸ Foster 2010, 234, 238–239.

³⁷⁹ Foster 2010, 214, 227. See also Nicklas 2002, 268.

³⁸⁰ Foster 2010, 240.

³⁸¹ It is interesting that the same verb form appears in Matthew's burial narrative (Matt. 27:59). Mathew's vocabulary may have influenced the author of the Gospel of Peter. (Crossan 1988, 243) However, the verbal agreement of a single word is significant only if one is convinced that the Gospel of Peter is literarily dependent on Matthew, and that the author prefers to combine vocabulary of the canonical gospels. Crossan 1988, 243 also notes that the same verb appears in a different mood (ἐλαβον) in John 19:40. See also Schaeffer 1995, 123.

³⁸² Schaeffer 1995, 123.

important part of the Jewish burial customs. In the Gospel of Peter Joseph fulfils this requirement. A similar enhancement of the burial tradition is the detail in Matthew 27:59 that Joseph wrapped the body in clean linen (ἐν σινδόνι καθαρά).³⁸³ In the Gospel of Peter the necessary connective καί is added between the washing and the wrapping of the body. The Gospel of Peter has a simplex form εἴλησε, while Mark has a complex form ἐνείλησεν. The use of a simple or compound form at this instance only indicates the different stylistic preferences of the authors. Mark has a tendency to use complex forms, while the Gospel of Peter prefers to use simple forms.³⁸⁴ The omission of the article τῇ in the Gospel of Peter is an insignificant change that also occurs in Matthew 27:59 and Luke 23:53.

The verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter 2:3b, 6:24a and Mark 15:43, 15:46 are extensive. More importantly, the structure of the sentences is identical in Mark and the Gospel of Peter. The redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter explains the minor differences between them. The changes are in accordance with his stylistic preferences, necessary adaptations to the narrative logic or expansions that enhance the burial tradition. Therefore, the most plausible explanation of the shared vocabulary is that the Gospel of Peter is literarily dependent on Mark.

Development of the canonical burial tradition in the Gospel of Peter

Verses 2:3a and 6:24b do not have extensive verbal agreements with any of the canonical gospels. They nevertheless indicate that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew the canonical gospels and developed the burial tradition insightfully. There are few details in verse 6:24b, which are shared with only one of the canonical gospels. Matthew 27:60 and the Gospel of Peter 6:24 share the tradition that Joseph buried Jesus in his own tomb.³⁸⁵ Although Matthew (ἐν τῷ καινῷ αὐτοῦ μνημείῳ) and the Gospel of Peter (εἰς ἴδιον τάφον) use a different expression, this is another instance where the Gospel of Peter contains a tradition that is unique to Matthew. More importantly, in the

³⁸³ Luz 2001, 576–578.

³⁸⁴ Foster 2010, 346. See also Mara 1973, 148; Schaeffer 1995, 123.

³⁸⁵ Crossan 1988, 244; Schaeffer 1995, 124; Luz 2001, 576.

Gospel of Peter, Jesus is buried in a tomb in a garden. The garden tomb is also mentioned in John 19:41. In the Gospel of Peter the tradition is elaborated by adding that the garden was called Joseph's garden.³⁸⁶ These shared details between the Gospel of Peter and the first and fourth gospel are not particularly significant in themselves. However, the numerous Matthean and Johannine traditions that are included in the Gospel of Peter support the conclusion that the author of the Gospel of Peter inserted traditions from the first and fourth gospels into his description of the burial of Jesus, which he drew primarily from Mark.³⁸⁷

In verse 2:3a the parallels between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels all but evaporate. The Gospel of Peter describes Joseph as a friend of Pilate and the Lord. Joseph's characterization in the Gospel of Peter does not bear any resemblance to his identity in the canonical accounts. Why has the author of the Gospel of Peter changed the description of Joseph if he had access to written copies of the canonical gospels? The answer to this question can be seen when the problems relating to the character of Joseph in the canonical gospels and the evangelists' attempts to solve these problems are examined in closer detail.

The different descriptions of Joseph of Arimathea in the canonical gospels reveal that the evangelists struggled with the identity of this character. Crossan points out that the underlying problem in all four gospels is that Joseph has to be a credible character in terms of his relationship to Pilate and Jesus.³⁸⁸ The comparison of the different descriptions reveals a consistent trajectory in the development of the tradition. The author of the Gospel of Peter provided another solution to the problematic role of this character, which took into consideration both the changes in the narrative of the Gospel of Peter and the problems involved with the identity of Joseph in the canonical gospels. The analysis will show that the changes in the characterization of Joseph are not a sign that the author did not have access to the copies of the canonical gospels, but rather that he was able to solve the problems involved in those descriptions.

³⁸⁶ Crossan 1988, 243–244; Schaeffer 1995, 124.

³⁸⁷ Crossan 1988, 243–244. It is interesting that Crossan uses here the same criteria to support the dependence upon the canonical gospels that has been seen as the major obstacle against his theory.

³⁸⁸ Crossan 1988, 238–239.

Mark describes Joseph of Arimathea as a member of the council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God (Mark 15:43). Mark's description leaves open the question of Joseph's relationship to Jesus. Did he intend to suggest that Joseph was a disciple or was sympathetic towards Jesus, or did he imply that Joseph wanted to bury Jesus out of obedience to the law? In Mark, the kingdom of God is a central theme right from the beginning and throughout the public career of Jesus. Therefore, someone who was also waiting for the kingdom of God and buries Jesus is probably sympathetic toward him. This interpretation of Joseph's identity leaves an internal inconsistency in Mark's narrative. If Joseph was a member of the council and sympathetic towards Jesus, why did Mark emphasize that the whole council was unanimous in charging and condemning him (Mark 14:55, 14:64)?³⁸⁹

Matthew and Luke seem to have realized the problem in Mark's narrative, but they presented different solutions to the problem. Matthew omitted Mark's reference to Joseph's membership in the council and described him as a rich man (Matt. 27:57). Luke retained Joseph as a member of the council, but explicitly emphasized that Joseph had not consented to the council's decision (Luke 23:50–51). Matthew and Luke also interpreted the description "waiting for the kingdom of God" differently. Luke preserved Mark's characterization, but his emphasis on Joseph's disagreement with the council's decision demonstrates that Luke regarded Joseph as sympathetic towards Jesus. Matthew explicitly described Joseph as a disciple of Jesus. Matthew did not explain how a disciple of Jesus was able to openly approach Pilate when all the other disciples had to flee.³⁹⁰ Luke's narrative leaves open the question that if Joseph was a member of the council and did not agree with its decision, why did he not defend Jesus? Matthew and Luke solved the inconsistency of Mark's narrative, but their solutions led them into other difficulties in the narrative logic. Matthew and Luke improve the narrative logic of Mark, but problems with Joseph's character still remain. John presented the least problematic description of Joseph's identity among the canonical gospels. Like Matthew, he states that Joseph was a disciple of Jesus.

³⁸⁹ Crossan 1988, 239.

³⁹⁰ Crossan 1988, 239.

This is not a problem, because he is only secretly a disciple (John 19.38). The motive for this behaviour is the fear of the Jews (John 7:13, 9:22, 12:42, 20:19). Therefore, he can be a disciple, but at the same time Jesus's enemies are not a threat to him.³⁹¹

The author of the gospel of Peter provides a new solution to the problematic identity of Joseph. In the Gospel of Peter the trial is under the control of Herod. Pilate washes his hands and withdraws from the proceedings. He does not sentence, even reluctantly, Jesus to be crucified. Therefore, there is no tension between Jesus and Pilate in the Gospel of Peter. As a result of this, the author is able to describe Joseph as a friend of Pilate and the Lord. However, emphasis on the guilt of the Jews created another problem for the Gospel of Peter's author. Pilate is no longer in charge of the trial and Joseph's request must be redirected to Herod. Thus, in the Gospel of Peter, Pilate has to ask the Lord's body from Herod. Pilate and Herod are on cordial terms as can be seen from Herod's friendly address and the granting of Pilate's request. This chain of friends solves the problematic identity of Joseph, and the body of the Lord can be handed over from his crucifiers to his friends.

The relocation of Joseph's request

A notable difference between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels in the burial tradition is that in the former Joseph's request is placed immediately after the trial. In the canonical gospels Joseph asks for Jesus's body after Jesus has died and the burial account is one uninterrupted scene. There are good arguments to support the conclusion that the author of the Gospel of Peter placed Joseph's request at the end of the trial. In the Gospel of Peter, Joseph's request interrupts the trial. At the end of the trial Herod orders Jesus to be crucified (Gos. Pet. 1:2), and only after Joseph's request from Pilate, Pilate's request from Herod, and Herod's response to Pilate, does Herod hand Jesus over to the Jewish people (Gos. Pet. 2:3–2:5b). The narrative can be read straight from the pronouncing of the sentence to

³⁹¹ Crossan 1988, 241; see also Foster 2010, 234–237.

handing Jesus over to the Jewish crucifiers. The awkward interruption in the narrative indicates that Joseph's request has been relocated to its current place in the Gospel of Peter.³⁹²

The purpose of the replacement seems to have been to arrange sufficient time for an honourable burial. All five passion narratives follow the same timeline. Jesus is crucified at the sixth hour and dies at the ninth hour. This leaves only a short period of time before the sunset and the beginning of the Sabbath. In the synoptic gospels the burial tradition develops towards a more straightforward sequence of events. In Mark, when Joseph approaches Pilate and asks for the body, Pilate is surprised that Jesus had died so quickly. He summons a centurion who has overseen the crucifixion and orders him to confirm that Jesus had really died. After the confirmation, Pilate grants Joseph's petition and Joseph buys linen cloth. Finally, Joseph wraps the body in linen and buries Jesus (Mark 15:43–46). Matthew and Luke were not comfortable with Mark's account of the burial. They both omitted Pilate's conversation with the centurion and the purchase of the linen cloth. These details are not included in John either.³⁹³

The author of the Gospel of Peter solved the problem of the hasty burial by placing Joseph's request at the end of the trial.³⁹⁴ The placement of the request is explained by the tight chronological sequence of the canonical passion narratives, but it is also connected to the redactional changes the author of the Gospel of Peter had made. Joseph's request from Pilate and Pilate's request from Herod solved the problem of taking the body of the Lord from the crucifiers to Jesus's friend, but this chain of friends created another problem for the author. If Joseph's request had been preserved in its original Markan context, the requests and responses between different characters in different locations would have created a similar time consuming procedure as the confirmation of Jesus's death in Mark 15:44–45. To solve this problem the author of the Gospel of Peter placed the request before the crucifixion to have ample time for an honourable burial. In the Gospel of Peter Joseph is already

³⁹² Crossan 1988, 101–102; See also Koester 1990, 231 n. 5; Mara 2003, 40.

³⁹³ Crossan 1988, 239.

³⁹⁴ The author of the Gospel of Peter placed Joseph's request in the trial setting since it is the last time when Pilate and Herod are mentioned. (Crossan 1988, 103–104.)

present at the foot of the cross immediately after the Lord has died. Therefore, he has sufficient time to wash the Lord's body before wrapping it in linen.³⁹⁵

The placement of Joseph's request reflects the development of the burial tradition. As the tradition of the burial develops, the tomb of Jesus becomes increasingly dignified as well. Mark's description of the tomb of Jesus is rather modest. Joseph buries him in a tomb hewn out of rock (Mark 15:46). Luke follows Mark's description on this point, but he emphasizes that Joseph placed the body in a tomb where no-one had been laid before (Luke 23:53). Matthew adds that the tomb was new and Joseph's own (Matt. 27:60). John also states that Jesus was buried in a new tomb in which no-one had ever been laid. According to John, the tomb was in a garden (John 19:41).³⁹⁶ As noted above, the Gospel of Peter has in common with Matthew that Jesus was buried in Joseph's own tomb and with John that Jesus's tomb was in a garden. Therefore, the Gospel of Peter represents a more developed form of the tradition and is likely dependent on Matthew and John.

In summary, the verbal agreements between the burial narratives of the Gospel of Peter and Mark are so extensive that they support the notion of a literary dependence between them. The author of the Gospel of Peter has solved several problematic details of the canonical burial narratives. This insightful rewriting of the burial tradition indicates that he had detailed knowledge of the content of the canonical burial narrative. Therefore, it is likely that the author of the Gospel of Peter had access to written copies of the other canonical gospels as well.

The non-canonical burial tradition in the Gospel of Peter

The author of the Gospel of Peter drew on canonical burial narratives and developed the burial traditions. The burial narrative of the Gospel of Peter also includes several traditions that are not found in the canonical gospels. Crossan argues that the author of the Gospel of Peter combined two contradictory burial traditions. According to Crossan the earliest passion

³⁹⁵ Schaeffer 1995, 123 argues that "washing contradicts the urgency for a burial by sunset". However, the replacement of Joseph's request and the rearrangement of the sequence of events that the immediate urgency of burial is avoided and there is enough time for the washing of the body in the Gospel of Peter.

³⁹⁶ Foster 2010, 235–236.

narrative presumed that the burial was carried out under the auspices of Herod Antipas. Those who had crucified Jesus were motivated to bury him out of observance of the law (Deut. 21:22–23). Crossan admits that his hypothetical *Cross Gospel*, embedded in the Gospel of Peter, never states this explicitly, but he claims that this was taken for granted in the narrative. According to Crossan, several verses in the Gospel of Peter implicitly refer to burial by enemies. The trial and the burial were under Herod's control (Gos. Pet. 1:1–1:2). The clearest evidence of this tradition is in verse 5:15, where the burial is the responsibility of the crucifiers, who become anxious about the sudden darkness and its consequences concerning the fulfilment of the law. The crucifiers also take the body down from the cross and lay it on the ground (Gos. Pet. 6:21). Finally, these same opponents are responsible for the tomb (Gos. Pet. 8:29–8:33).³⁹⁷

Crossan supports his argument of an early tradition for the burial by enemies by providing other sources that contain this tradition. In Acts 13:27–29 those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers took Jesus down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. Although Crossan admits that this may be only a shortened account of Luke's passion narrative, he considers the idea that Acts 13:27–29 might be a reflection of an older burial tradition. In John 19:31 the Jews ask Pilate to break the legs of the crucified and take their bodies down before the Sabbath (John 19:31), Crossan interpreting that John knew the burial by enemies tradition from the *Cross Gospel*. In the *Epistula Apostolorum* 9a, which dates from the early second century, "the lord is he who was crucified by Pontius Pilate and Archelaus between two thieves who was buried in a place called the <skull>". Lactantius, writing in the early fourth century, stated in *Divine Institutiones* 4.19 that "they took him down from the cross and having shut him up in a tomb, they secure surrounded it with a guard of soldiers".³⁹⁸ Crossan argues that in the second phase of the development of the burial tradition, Jesus is buried by Joseph under Pilate's control and the burial receives more honourable features. Eventually, the later intracanonical tradition suppressed the earlier tradition of burial by enemies.

³⁹⁷ Crossan 1988, 22, 102–103, 236–237.

³⁹⁸ Crossan 1988, 234–236, 240–242.

The trajectory of this development is visible in the second century Gospel of Peter.³⁹⁹

Unfortunately, Crossan is somewhat ambiguous about the insertion of the canonical tradition into the Gospel of Peter. In the presentation of his main thesis Crossan states that verses 6:23–6:24 are a summary of the burial account of the canonical gospels, while verses 2:3–2:5a are a redactional scene preparation for the later insertion. The two contradictory traditions are harmonized as Joseph’s request to Pilate is redirected to Herod, and the content of Herod’s response (Gos. Pet. 2:5a) is borrowed from the *Cross Gospel* (Gos. Pet. 5:15).⁴⁰⁰ However, in the analysis of the burial scene Crossan repeats this thesis, but also states that “[t]he opening words in 2:3–4 refer to the intracanonical burial by friends”.⁴⁰¹ Furthermore, in a later context Crossan writes that the Gospel of Peter’s author placed a synthesis of canonical description of Joseph’s identity and the request for the body in Gos. Pet. 2:3–2:5a. Verses 6:23–6:24 contain the burial tradition of the intracanonical tradition.⁴⁰² The reader is left with the impression that a summary of the intracanonical burial tradition is inserted into both Gos. Pet. 2:3–2:5a and 6:23–6:24. The traditions seem to be harmonized only partly in the redactional scene preparation (Gos. Pet. 2:3–2:5a). It is difficult to interpret how these ambiguous claims should be interpreted. The latter seems to be a more accurate description of Crossan’s position and the focus of the following discussion will apply a more detailed analysis. To make matters worse, Schaeffer’s criticism of Crossan’s thesis seems to focus on the main thesis and does not discuss Crossan’s more accurate analysis.⁴⁰³

The strongest evidence that supports Crossan’s theory is found in John 19:31. After the death of Jesus the Jews, not wanting to leave the bodies on the crosses during the Sabbath, ask Pilate to have the legs of the crucified broken so they might take the bodies down before sunset. Deuteronomy 21:22–23 forms the background of this verse. In the light of the discussion in

³⁹⁹ Crossan 1988, 20–23, 242–244.

⁴⁰⁰ Crossan 1988 20–23. See also Crossan 1988, 102–103.

⁴⁰¹ Crossan 1988, 103.

⁴⁰² Crossan 1988, 242–243.

⁴⁰³ Schaeffer 1995, 94–100.

chapter three the dawning of the Sabbath and the desire to remove the body from the cross before sunset (Gos. Pet. 2:5a) may reflect John 19:31.

Another controversial verse is a part of Paul's speech in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:29): "[T]hey [people of Jerusalem and their leaders] had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb." This is in contradiction with Luke's gospel. Haenchen interprets that in this verse Luke presents a brief summary of the passion narrative.⁴⁰⁴ Schaeffer emphasizes that in verses 13:27–29 the crucifixion is in under Pilate's control and the Jews have to ask him for permission to crucify Christ.⁴⁰⁵ Crossan notices these difficulties and does not place too much weight too much on such an uncertain verse.⁴⁰⁶ Schaeffer observes that *Epistula Apostolorum* contains a confusing tradition that Jesus was crucified by or under Pontius Pilate and Archelaus, but does not say who buried Jesus. Lactantius states that the Jews buried Jesus, but it dates from the fourth century and is far too late to be used as a witness of a first-century tradition. Both of these works bear the stamp of anti-Jewish attitudes.⁴⁰⁷

The control of the events by Jewish people and their leaders in the passion and resurrection narratives of the Gospel of Peter indicates a later rather than an early tradition. Herod is in charge of the trial. Koester argues that Herod's role in the trial is clearly a secondary motif.⁴⁰⁸ The anti-Jewish character of the Gospel of Peter continues throughout the fragment. Pilate washes his hands and withdraws from the trial, while the Jews abuse and crucify Jesus. The Roman soldiers are not mentioned in the passion narrative. The Jewish control of events in the Gospel of Peter aims at placing the blame of Jesus's death on the Jewish leaders and people. The control of the trial and crucifixion are in the hands of the Jews, but this is a result of increasing anti-Jewish sentiment and Christian apology that are signs of a second century development. Moreover, the tomb is not in the control of the Jewish leaders. Herod is not mentioned at all in the guard at the tomb narrative and the Jewish leaders have to ask soldiers from Pilate to guard the tomb. This

⁴⁰⁴ Haenchen 1971, 410.

⁴⁰⁵ Schaeffer 1995, 95–96.

⁴⁰⁶ Crossan 1988, 240.

⁴⁰⁷ Schaeffer 1995, 95–96

⁴⁰⁸ Koester 1990, 217. The majority of scholars agree that the anti-Jewish tone of the Gospel of Peter is a sign of later development in the tradition.

inconsistency supports a second-century combination of earlier sources and is difficult to explain in terms of an early and tightly constructed narrative.⁴⁰⁹

Another weakness in Crossan's theory is his reconstruction of the original passion and resurrection tradition. If there had been such a narrative, it surely would have included some kind of description of the burial of Jesus between those two sections. It is rather unlikely that the original passion and resurrection narrative would not have contained such a description when it contained a very long section on the guard at the tomb (Gos. Pet. 8:28–8:34) and a magnificent resurrection scene at the tomb (Gos. Pet. 9:35–11:42). Would the readers not have wondered how the Lord's body got to the tomb in the first place? The most likely explanation of the evidence is that the Gospel of Peter did not speak of the burial by enemies. It contained a burial by Joseph from the very beginning.

Crossan's hypothesis of an early non-canonical burial tradition that was suppressed by the canonical tradition of Joseph of Arimathea is somewhat one-sided. Both the intra-canonical and extra-canonical burial traditions are developed in the Gospel of Peter. The reasons for their development support different motives. On the one hand, the desire to make Jesus's burial as honourable as possible is a typical apologetic feature, which explains the redaction of the canonical burial tradition. On the other hand, the growing anti-Jewish tendency is visible in the role of the Jews in the passion narrative, which led to their involvement in the burial tradition. The development of both these tendencies is visible in the Gospel of Peter.

Crossan's thesis of an early tradition of a burial by enemies in the *Cross Gospel* is not supported by the evidence. The evidence instead supports the conclusion that the burial by Joseph is the earlier tradition in the Gospel of Peter, but the expansion of the burial tradition still needs to be explained. If the author of the Gospel of Peter knew and used the canonical burial tradition, why did he expand the motive of burial out of obedience to the law as an alternative to the Joseph tradition? The anti-Jewish redaction of the author explains the responsibility of Herod and the Jews in passion narrative and the narrative logic requires that they, not Pilate and the Roman soldier, hand over

⁴⁰⁹ See below chapter 5.1.

the body of the Lord to Joseph. However, this creates another problem for the author. Herod and the Jewish people are consistently characterized as the opponents of Jesus. Why are they suddenly favourable to a request by a friend of the Lord. Furthermore, the burial challenges the negative image of the Jews, which the author attempts to create. Foster notes the tension in the narrative:⁴¹⁰ “There is a degree of incongruence between the action of passing judgement on Jesus and the contrast with the hypothetical event that would have occurred if there had not been a request for the body.”⁴¹¹ Therefore, the author had to provide an explanation for their sudden benevolence. The requirement to bury a crucified person before sunset provides an answer to these questions. Herod and the Jews hand over the body of the Lord to Joseph for an honourable burial, they are nevertheless characterized as being concerned about a commandment of their law, while at the same time they have murdered the Son of God. The reference to Deuteronomy 21:22–23 serves the various purposes of the author. It provides a credible motive for Herod and the Jewish people to allow the burial of Jesus, and at the same time upholds the narrative logic and the negative image of Jews. Foster argues that the scriptural citation is another anti-Jewish element of the Gospel of Peter. Deuteronomy 21:23 refers to a lawful execution, but the author of the Gospel of Peter uses a term that refers to a murder. The author characterizes Herod and the Jews as murderers of the Lord.⁴¹²

Conclusion

The burial tradition in the Gospel of Peter (2:3–2:5a, 6:23–6:24) is dependent on the canonical gospels. Verses 2:3b and 6:23a have a close and extensive verbal agreement with Mark. Literary dependence is the most plausible explanation of the extensive verbal agreements. This conclusion is supported by the comparison of the differences in the vocabulary. They all represent the stylistic preferences of the author, elaborations of the existing traditions, or

⁴¹⁰ Foster 2010, 243.

⁴¹¹ Foster 2010, 240.

⁴¹² Foster 2010, 245. See also Hieke 2007, 95 and Henderson 69. Augustin 2014, 166–167 notes that the verb is primarily used in the context of murder, but there are also exceptions of a lawful execution. However, the verb clearly refers to murder in most cases and this is the image, which the author intended to create for his audience.

are necessary changes to the surrounding narrative. Nothing in these verses requires anything other than literary dependence on Mark and a careful redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. In verse 6:24b there are no exact verbal agreements with any of the canonical gospels. However, the author maintains the Matthean tradition that the tomb was Joseph's own and the Johannine tradition that the tomb was in a garden. In addition to combining these two originally separate traditions, the author of the Gospel of Peter elaborates the tradition by claiming that the whole garden was Joseph's. The description of Joseph's identity (Gos. Pet. 2:3) is an insightful attempt to solve the problems of Joseph's character in the canonical gospels and this description is further elaborated in verse 6:23a. Joseph's request is also placed in an earlier phase in the passion narrative. The request is placed at the end of the trial, because it is the final scene where Herod and Pilate appear together. The primary purpose of this placement is to provide Joseph with ample time to wash the body of the Lord in order to fulfil all the necessary preparations for an honourable burial. The author's detailed redaction improves the canonical descriptions of the burial. This detailed and thorough reworking of the canonical tradition indicates that the author knew this tradition well and made the redactional changes accordingly.

The burial scene in the Gospel of Peter, however, is not based only on the canonical gospels, but it is also an interesting combination of two originally separate burial traditions. The earlier tradition is based on the canonical gospels. Joseph of Arimathea requests Jesus's body from Pilate and buries him out of personal respect towards him. The later tradition has Herod and the Jews in charge of the proceedings and the crucifixion. They would have buried Jesus out of obedience to the law if Joseph had not requested the body. The author of the Gospel of Peter combined these two traditions by having Joseph's request to Pilate redirected to Herod and, after the Lord has died, the Jews hand over the Lord's body to Joseph. Verse 2:3 follows closely the canonical tradition of the burial of Jesus, but in verse 2:5a the Gospel of Peter clearly goes its own way. Verse 2:4 connects these two originally separate burial traditions together. A similar redaction appears in the account of Jesus's burial. In verse 6:23a the Jews rejoice after the sun shines again

(Gos. Pet. 6:22). This is due to the fact that there is still time to bury Jesus without transgressing the law concerning burial before sunset (Gos. Pet. 2:5a; 5:15). In verse 6:23b the Jews hand over the Lord's body to Joseph, who is already present at the foot of the cross. This verse connects the responsibility of the Jewish people in the Gospel of Peter and the canonical burial tradition. The description of the burial by Joseph in the Gospel of Peter 6:23c–24 is very similar to the content of the canonical gospels. The account of the burial of Jesus in the Gospel of Peter can be summarized in the following table 1. Columns A and A' have parallels in the canonical gospels' accounts of the burial by Joseph. Columns C and C' do not have a parallel to these narratives. Instead, they present Herod as the one who is responsible in Jesus's trial and the Jews as the crucifiers of Jesus. They also have in common the issue of keeping the law and burial before sunset. Columns B and B' harmonize between these originally separate traditions.

Table 1.

A Joseph's request and identity (2:3)	A' Joseph buries Jesus (6:23c–24)
B From Pilate to Herod (2:4)	B' From Jews to Joseph (6:23b)
C Herod and Deut. 21:22–23 (2:5a)	C' Jews and Deut. 21:22–23 (6:23a)

In the Gospel of Peter the burial by the Jews out of obedience to the law is described as a possibility that is never realized. It has an apologetic and a polemical function in trying to explain why the Jewish opponents of Jesus handed over his body and at the same time depicted them as the murderers of the Lord. The polemical and apologetic redaction are present throughout the Gospel of Peter, which indicates that the elaboration of the burial tradition was composed by the author of the Gospel of Peter.

3.3. The activities of the disciples

7:26 Ἐγὼ δὲ μετὰ τῶν ἐταίρων ἐλυπούμην, καὶ τετρωμένοι κατὰ διάνοιαν ἐκρυβόμεθα· ἐζητούμεθα γὰρ ὑπ' αὐτῶν ὡς κακοῦργοι καὶ ὡς τὸν ναὸν θέλοντες ἐμπρῆσαι. 7:27 Ἐπὶ δὲ τούτοις πᾶσιν ἐνηστεύομεν καὶ ἐκαθεζόμεθα πενθοῦντες καὶ κλαίοντες νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἕως τοῦ σαββάτου.

14:58 Ἦν δὲ τελευταία ἡμέρα τῶν ἁζύμων, καὶ πολλοὶ τινες ἐξήρχοντο ὑποστρέφοντες εἰς τοὺς οἴκους αὐτῶν τῆς ἑορτῆς παυσαμένης. 14:59 Ἡμεῖς δὲ οἱ δώδεκα μαθηταὶ τοῦ Κυρίου ἐκλαίμεν καὶ ἐλπούμεθα, καὶ ἕκαστος λυπούμενος διὰ τὸ συμβᾶν ἀπηλλάγη εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ. 14:60 Ἐγὼ δὲ Σίμων Πέτρος καὶ Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφός μου λαβόντες ἡμῶν τὰ λῖνα ἀπήλαμεν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν· καὶ ἦν σὺν ἡμῖν Λευεὶς ὁ τοῦ Ἀλφαίου, ὃν Κύριος ...

7:26 But I mourned with my fellows. We were devastated and hid ourselves, because they sought us after as evildoers and people who wanted to set the temple on fire. 7:27 Because of all these things we fasted. We sat lamenting and weeping night and day until the Sabbath.

14:58 It was the last day of the feast of the unleavened bread and many returned to their homes after the feast had ended. 14:59 But we, the twelve disciples of the Lord, wept and mourned, everyone filled with sorrow for what had happened departed to his home. 14:60 But I, Simon Peter, and my brother Andrew took our nets and went to the sea. And with us was Levi, the son of Alphaeus, whom the Lord...

The Gospel of Peter 7:26–7:27 describes what the disciples did after Jesus’s death. The author of the Gospel of Peter emphasizes their grief and mourning. The disciples were also forced to hide while they were mourning, because they were being sought by the Jews. The Gospel of Peter contains an interesting tradition that the disciples were being sought, because they wanted to burn the temple. The mourning of the disciples continues until the end of the feast when they return to their homes. The first person narrator is identified as Simon Peter at the beginning of narrative that presumably describes the appearance of the Lord to the twelve disciples at the Lake of Galilee (Gos. Pet. 14:58–14:60). Verses 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:59 are closely connected. They both emphasize the mourning of the disciples. Crossan observes that these verses also establish a chronological timeframe for the disciples’ actions.⁴¹³ Moreover, there is a contrast between the Jews and the disciples in both sections of the narrative.

The description of the disciples’ activities between the death and appearance of Jesus in the Gospel of Peter 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:59 does not have apparent parallels in the canonical gospels. The closest parallel is in John in 20:19–23. In the fourth gospel the disciples are gathered behind

⁴¹³ Crossan 1988, 23; See also Schaeffer 1995, 102.

locked doors, because of the fear of the Jews. However, in John the hiding takes place on the evening of the first day after the resurrection, while in the Gospel of Peter the disciples hide from the day of the crucifixion until the following Sabbath. Moreover, in John the disciples see the Lord on the first day of the week in Jerusalem, but in the Gospel of Peter the appearance to the disciples occurs after the feast has ended and they have returned to their homes where they go to the sea with their nets. In the Gospel of Peter Christ's appearance is presumably located in Galilee. In the final verse of the fragment the disciples take their nets and go to the sea (Gos. Pet. 14:60). It is probable that this verse begins a narrative which describes Jesus's appearance to the disciples. There is an appearance narrative in John 21:1–14, which also has a list of disciples at the beginning of the pericope (John 21:2). Both gospels mention Simon Peter first in the list of disciples, but Andrew and Levi (Gos. Pet. 14:60) are not mentioned in John 21:2. Moreover, the Gospel of Peter mentions the twelve disciples of the Lord in the previous verse. Therefore, it is possible that the author intended to name twelve disciples in the appearance narrative as well. John, however, mentions only seven disciples in the beginning of the appearance narrative.

The Gospel of Peter 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:60 does not have extensive verbal agreements with John or the synoptic gospels. The Gospel of Peter shares a few expressions with the appearance narratives in John and the so-called longer ending of Mark. The tradition of lamenting and weeping (πενθοῦντες καὶ κλαίοντες) of the disciples has verbal agreement with the longer ending of Mark 16:10. Mary Magdalene tells the mourning and weeping (πενθοῦσαι καὶ κλαίουσιν) disciples that she has seen Jesus. Crossan and Foster argue that the narrative of the disciples is a free composition on the basis of a few themes drawn from John.⁴¹⁴ However, Koester argues that the different lists of disciples indicate that the Gospel of Peter is not dependent on John.⁴¹⁵

The verbal agreements are not substantial enough to support a dependence between these two texts in either direction, but a parallel tradition in the longer ending of Mark indicates that the tradition of the

⁴¹⁴ Crossan 1988, 265–266; see Henderson 2011, 106.

⁴¹⁵ Koester 1990, 240; Foster 2010, 354–355; See Henderson 2011, 106

weeping and mourning of the disciples developed in the second century. The vocabulary of the two gospels does not offer support for a literary dependence between them in either direction. At most, the description of the disciples in the Gospel of Peter is created freely on the basis of Johannine traditions. It is possible that the appearance narrative of the Gospel of Peter is dependent on John 21:1–14. However, the fragment breaks off at this point, which makes this conclusion less certain.⁴¹⁶ The few shared themes between John and Gospel of Peter 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:60 alone do not allow the conclusion that the latter was dependent on the former. However, the fact that the author of the Gospel of Peter seems to have known several other traditions that are peculiar to John (the day of crucifixion, the non-breaking of the bones, the nails, the garden tomb) makes the hypothesis of a direct dependence the most plausible explanation of the similarities in verses 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:60.⁴¹⁷

Verses 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:60 have an important role in Crossan’s theory of the Gospel of Peter’s composition. He argues that they are a later insertion into the earliest passion and resurrection narrative. According to Crossan the *Cross Gospel* did not include a narrative of Jesus’s appearance to the disciples and therefore lacked the commissioning and the apostolic mandate. During the second century the increasing influence of the canonical gospels led the redactor to add an appearance narrative (Gos. Pet. 14:60) to the earliest passion and resurrection narrative. Crossan claims that the sudden arrival of the disciples in verse 14:60 required an explanation of their activities between their flight and Christ’s appearance. The second-century redactor solved this problem by inserting the verses 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:59 as a preparation for Christ’s appearance to the disciples.⁴¹⁸

The author of the Gospel of Peter does fill in the gap in the activities of the disciples between the time of Jesus’s death and the appearance in Galilee, but this was not the primary purpose of these verses, as will be shown in the following discussion.⁴¹⁹ Mark originally ended with verse 16:8 and did not include an appearance narrative. In the second century two

⁴¹⁶ Crossan 1988, 291.

⁴¹⁷ See above chapter 2.1,

⁴¹⁸ Crossan 1988, 23.

⁴¹⁹ Foster 2010, 359.

different appearance narratives, the so-called shorter and longer endings of Mark, were inserted at the end of the gospel (Mark 16:9–20). When these appearance narrative were attached to Mark, the redactors did not regard it as necessary to add any account of the disciples' prior activities. Similarly, Matthew inserted an appearance narrative and the commissioning of the disciples (Matt. 28:16–20) without any need to explain where the disciples had been during this interval. Therefore, Crossan's argument that if an appearance narrative was added to the end of a gospel in the second century it was necessary to explain the disciples' activities before they met the risen Jesus is not sustainable in the light of the evidence. An ignorance of the disciples' actions during the passion of Jesus did not require the insertion of verses 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:59.

The primary motive for the inclusion of verses 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:59 can be found within these verses. Crossan argues that the description of the disciples' mourning emphasizes that their behaviour was proper. He notes that there is an "almost hysterical reiteration of apostolic grief in 7:26–27 and 14:59."⁴²⁰ The mourning of the disciples in 7:26–7:27 and 14:59 underlines their concern for the Lord. It seems that the disciples' abandonment of Jesus was a delicate point for the author and he tried to overcome the discrepancy between the actions of the disciples and their role as the apostles of the faith. The apology was not directed to outsiders, but rather to believers who might be troubled by the actions of the disciples.⁴²¹ The apologetic motive in verses 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:59 provides an explanation why the author of the Gospel of Peter included them in his gospel. These verses are not a preparation for the following narrative, but function by themselves as an important part of the author's redaction.

Verses 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:59 continue a trajectory that had begun in the canonical gospels. The canonical gospels say very little about the disciples' activities after they have abandoned Jesus in Gethsemane. In Mark and Matthew the disciples flee and abandon Jesus when he is arrested. Only

⁴²⁰ Crossan 1988, 29. Nicklas 2001, 320 also draws attention to the fact the mourning of the disciples is repeatedly emphasized.

⁴²¹ Crossan 1988, 266–267, 292; Vaganay 1930, 271–273 also argues that the verses 7:26–7:27 attempt to describe the disciples behaviour during the passion of Jesus as exemplary. Vaganay also argues that these verses reflect the fasting practice of Christians in the second century (Vaganay 1930, 273–275; see Mara 1973, 156–160). Foster 2010, 359 criticizes this interpretation.

Peter's denial (Mark 14:66–72, Matt. 26:69–75) is mentioned before the women receive the message from the angel to tell the disciples of the resurrection (Mark 16:7, Matt. 28:7). Schaeffer points out that in Luke not only the women, but all the followers of Jesus (πάντες οἱ γνωστοὶ αὐτοῦ) were watching the crucifixion from a distance (Luke 23:49). In other words, the disciples are present during the final hours of Jesus's life in Luke. John developed the tradition even further by inserting the beloved disciple at the foot of the cross with Jesus's mother (John 19:25–27).⁴²² In Luke and John the presence of the disciples near the cross also prepares one for their visit to the empty tomb and the resurrection appearances in Jerusalem (Luke 24:36–43, John 20:19–29). In Mark and Matthew the disciples have fled and the resurrection appearance are located in Galilee (Matt. 28:16–20, Mark 16:7). The author of the Gospel of Peter continued a trajectory that had begun in the canonical gospel by elaborating the passion tradition with the disciples' activities in Jerusalem.

In the canonical gospels the disciples fled and abandoned Jesus when he was arrested. It cast a dark shadow over the future leaders of the early Christian movement. Moreover, it implied that Jesus had chosen unworthy men as his closest followers. An examination of the canonical gospels demonstrates that there was an apologetic tendency to solve the problems caused by the disciples' flight. Mark 14:50 and Matthew 26:56 explicitly mention the flight of the disciples, but in Luke 22:47–53 and John 18:1–14 this embarrassing tradition has received several apologetic features. Luke and John attempt to justify the actions of the disciples and at the same time increase the control over Jesus in the final events of his life. Luke narrates that the disciples asked Jesus if they should strike with a sword and before an answer one of them strikes off a high priest's servant's ear. Jesus replies that they should let this happen and heals the servant's ear (Luke 22:49–51). In other words, the disciples were willing to fight, but the will of Jesus is that they do not. In the fourth gospel Jesus's agony and the flight of the disciples is only a reminiscence of the earlier tradition. Jesus is in total control of the events of his death. He even requests his captors to let the

⁴²² Schaeffer 1995, 102.

others go. In a parallel narrative to Luke, the one who strikes the high priest's servant with the sword is identified as Peter. The servant is named Malkos, but the healing miracle is not narrated (John 18:8–11). The scene in John is probably a testimony to the high Christology of the fourth gospel, but it indirectly describes the disciples more favourably. Jesus does not expect that his disciples will follow him, but to leave him to fulfil his destiny. The canonical gospels demonstrate a trajectory where Jesus's control of the events increases and at the same time the shame of the disciples' flight is reduced.

The fragment of the Gospel of Peter that has survived does not include the Gethsemane scene. However, the trajectory of the tradition and the thorough apologetic redaction in the surviving fragment of the Gospel of Peter indicate that it is at least plausible, if not even probable, that a similar emphasis was included in the lost section of the passion narrative as well. The embarrassing tradition was too firmly established to be omitted completely. The author of the Gospel of Peter rewrote the actions and motives of the disciples. He attempted to depict them in a favourable light. The apologetic intention provides a plausible explanation for the development of the description of the disciple's activities.

Fear of the Jews

It was noted above that the Gospel of Peter 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:60 shares several themes and expressions with John. In John 20:19 the disciples are gathered behind closed doors, because they were afraid of the Jews (διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων). The expression probably originated from John. In John it is not explicitly stated that the disciples were hiding, but the gathering behind closed door implies this.⁴²³ In the Gospel of Peter the disciples hide, because they are being sought by the Jews. Foster has drawn the conclusion that in the Gospel of Peter the disciples are hiding because they fear the Jews.⁴²⁴ However, the Gospel of Peter does not explicitly state this. The hiding of the disciples and the fear of the Jews are both themes that appear in the

⁴²³ Verheyden 2007, 285.

⁴²⁴ Foster 2010, 463. Henderson 2010, 206 also concluded that “the same fear of the Jews” is intended in verses 7:26–7:27 and 12:50–12:54. See Schaeffer 1995, 104.

Gospel of Peter. The author of the Gospel of Peter has made some subtle but consistent changes to these traditions. The expression τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων appears three times in the Gospel of Peter, but only in the empty tomb narrative (Gos. Pet. 12:50, 12:52, 12:54). Although the Gospel of Peter implies that the disciples were hiding, because they were afraid, the explicit expression has been transferred to concern the women in the empty tomb narrative. It seems that the author of the Gospel of Peter attempted to protect the honour of the disciples by making the explicit reference to fear concern only the women. At the same time the fear of the Jews receives a new polemical tone. Foster notes that “the Jews appear more loathsome since they are depicted as a potential threat to pious women going about their funerary duties”.⁴²⁵ Therefore, the tradition of the fear of the Jews has been thoroughly rewritten in the Gospel of Peter. Its replacement from the description of the disciples to the narrative of the women at the tomb serves as an apology for the disciples and as polemic against the Jews.

The interpretation that the author of the Gospel of Peter downplayed the tradition that the disciples were afraid of the Jews leads to the question why did he mention that they were hiding in the first place? Schaeffer has offered a convincing answer to this question. The description of the disciples’ activities (Gos. Pet. 7:26–7:27) precedes the guard at the tomb narrative (Gos. Pet. 8:28–11:49). The guard at the tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter attempts to refute the charge that the disciples stole the body of Jesus (Gos. Pet. 8:29). The hiding of the disciples securely places them far away from the tomb. This can be seen as a minor part of the apology for the resurrection of Jesus and against the charge that disciples stole the body of Jesus.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁵ Foster 2010, 463.

⁴²⁶ Schaeffer 1991, 506; Schaeffer 1995, 103–104. Henderson 2011, 139 notes that Matthew’s guard at the tomb narrative leaves open the whereabouts of the disciples. The description of the disciples’ activities was probably inserted before the guard at the tomb narrative to emphasize this apologetic motif. Crossan 1988, 291 concludes that their activities are repeated in verses 14:58–14:59 which function as an introduction to a new geographical location.

The destruction of the temple

One of the striking features in the description of the disciples' activities is that they were being sought as possible arsonists of the temple (Gos. Pet. 7:26). Schaeffer claims that well in to the second century this was a standard Jewish accusation against Christians.⁴²⁷ However, she does not cite any ancient source to substantiate this claim. The accusation that the disciples wanted to set the temple on fire is unknown elsewhere in the Christian or Jewish sources.⁴²⁸ Other studies of the Gospel of Peter do not mention this accusation. The existence of this accusation in the ancient sources would significantly strengthen the proposal presented here and make the following discussion on the circumstantial evidence unnecessary.

Crossan proposes that Jesus's words against the temple (Mark 14:58) provided the origin of the accusation that the disciples wanted to set the temple on fire.⁴²⁹ The short passage in the Gospel of Peter provides only indirect evidence of the development of the tradition. However, the following arguments can be presented to support Crossan's hypothesis. The tradition that Jesus had predicted the destruction of the temple is found in the synoptic gospels (Mark 13:2, 14:58, Matt. 24:2, 27:61, Luke 21:5). In John's narrative the Pharisees and the high priest agree to kill Jesus in order to protect the temple from the Romans. The irony of the narrative is apparent. The author and his readers know that the temple was destroyed by the Romans and the Jewish leaders have brought upon themselves the very thing they were attempting to avoid.⁴³⁰ In the second century several Christian authors claim that the destruction of the temple was divine retribution for Jesus's death. The Christian interpretation of the destruction of the temple as divine punishment was probably taken from the Scriptures. This theme was widely represented in the Scriptures as the explanation for the destruction of the first temple. The sins of the people caused God to hand them to their enemy. This interpretation was reused to explain the disaster of 70 AD (4. Ezra and 2. Baruch).

⁴²⁷ Schaeffer 1995, 107. See also Kirk 1994, 590.

⁴²⁸ Augustin 2014, 211.

⁴²⁹ Crossan 1988, 266. Henderson 2011, 106 mentions the false witnesses in Matthew 26:61.

⁴³⁰ Hakola 2005, 94.

I tentatively argue that the accusation that the destruction of the temple was divine retribution for the killing of the Lord led to the counterclaim that Christians were responsible for setting the temple on fire. A similar development of a claim and counterclaim between Christians and Jews is visible in the guard at the tomb narrative. Christians claimed that the empty tomb demonstrated the resurrection of Jesus. The Jews who did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus claimed that the disciples had stolen his body and the Christian belief was the result of deliberate deception by the disciples. The Christians responded by creating a tradition of a guard at the tomb and the conspiracy of the Jewish leadership. A similar logic seems to be behind the accusation of setting the temple on fire. The most plausible explanation for the accusation is that the Jews denied the prophecy of Jesus and the Christian interpretation of the destruction of the temple. Instead they explained the disaster as a crime committed by Christians as part of a deliberate deception. The disciples set the temple on fire themselves in order to claim that Jesus had prophesied its fate. The available evidence allows only the reconstruction of a circumstantial case to support this hypothesis. However, it is difficult to explain the origin of the accusation in any other way. Why would the Christians have created a tradition that the disciples were indirectly accused of setting the temple on fire only to refute it as false? Therefore, the most plausible explanation for the tradition that the disciples wanted to set the temple on fire is that it was a Jewish counterclaim against the Christian tradition that Jesus had predicted the destruction of the temple.

This interpretation is also supported by the preceding narrative. In verse 7:25 the Jews and their leaders lament their sins and the end of Jerusalem. In the post 70 AD situation in which the Gospel of Peter was written, both Jews and Christians knew that the end of Jerusalem meant not only the destruction of the city but also the temple.⁴³¹ In verses 7:25–7:26 the author presents the Christian interpretation of the event: the temple was not burned by the disciples, but its destruction was a divine retribution for the sins of the Jews against the Lord. Verses 7:26–7:27 are connected to the preceding narrative through this thematic connection. Earlier it was argued

⁴³¹ Dewey 1990, 107–108.

that the hiding of the disciples connects verses 7:26–7:27 to the apology of the resurrection narrative. Therefore, the author of the Gospel of Peter placed the description of the disciples between the passion and resurrection narratives, because in the current location it serves the apologetic and polemic purposes of the author.

Until the Sabbath

There is a chronological connection between verses 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:59. The disciples mourned and fasted until the Sabbath (Gos. Pet. 7:27) and left Jerusalem after the feast had ended (Gos. Pet. 14:58).⁴³² These are examples of the chronological markers that the author of the Gospel of Peter used in the scene shifts.⁴³³ The narrative logic of these verses is that the disciples were hiding from the Jews in Jerusalem, but when the feast was over, they could return home safely among the crowds.⁴³⁴ Although the chronological framework and the narrative logic of verses 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:59 is clear, there is a disagreement over how long the disciples remained in hiding. Henderson interprets that the disciples fasted from Jesus's arrest in Gethsemane until the day after the crucifixion,⁴³⁵ but Crossan has argued that the mourning lasted a week longer.⁴³⁶

This question has implications for the question whether the author of the Gospel of Peter knew Jewish customs concerning the Sabbath and the feast of the unleavened bread. The Passover fell on the 14th of Nisan and the feast of the unleavened bread lasted seven days, the 15th–21st day of Nisan. They formed a festival that lasted eight days.⁴³⁷ Crossan argues that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew that the Sabbath was about to begin in a few hours (Gos. Pet. 7:27, 9:34). The expression νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας probably refers to a longer time than one day.⁴³⁸ The interpretation that the disciples returned to their homes after eight days of mourning indicates that during the

⁴³² Crossan 1988, 266, 291.

⁴³³ Foster 2010, 498; Henderson 2011, 106, 200–201.

⁴³⁴ Crossan 1988, 291–292.

⁴³⁵ Henderson 2011, 138–139.

⁴³⁶ Crossan 1988, 266. Eight days is also supported by Verheyden 2002, 260.

⁴³⁷ Foster 2010, 499.

⁴³⁸ Crossan 1988, 266.

five days after the discovery of the empty tomb they did not receive information of this from the women. This interpretation contradicts the narrative of Matthew, Luke and John. Foster does not regard this as impossible but as counter-intuitive.⁴³⁹ Vaganay, however, argues that this is exactly what the Gospel of Peter's author intended.⁴⁴⁰ In the following analysis of the empty tomb narrative I will argue that the author of the Gospel of Peter wanted to preserve the role of the women as witnesses to the resurrection, but he did not want to preserve the tradition that the disciples hear of the empty tomb from the women before Jesus appears to them. After the resurrection the disciples encounter Jesus without any word from the women. This creates a strained narrative logic, but the primary purpose of the author of the Gospel of Peter was to avoid criticism that the disciples' belief in the resurrection of Jesus rested on the testimony of the women.⁴⁴¹ Therefore, it seems that the author of the Gospel of Peter had the last day of the feast (Gos. Pet. 14:58–14:59) in mind when he wrote that the disciples fasted until the Sabbath (Gos. Pet. 7:27). The author of the Gospel of Peter also knew that the festival lasted eight days and was aware of the Jewish customs.

Peter as the narrator

The Gospel of Peter derives its identification from verses 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:60. The author of the Gospel of Peter used a first-person narrator (Gos. Pet. 7:26, 14:59) and identified the narrator as Simon Peter (Gos. Pet. 14:60). It is probable that the author had also used Peter as the narrator earlier in the gospel.⁴⁴² The use of a first-person narrator and Peter as the narrator are signs of the secondary nature of these verses.⁴⁴³ The secondary nature of these verses is supported by scholars who have argued that the Gospel of Peter contains a significant number of early and independent traditions.⁴⁴⁴ The Gospel of Peter is part of the growing second-century Petrine literature, but the text does not convey any signs of the use of this

⁴³⁹ Foster 2010, 499–500.

⁴⁴⁰ Vaganay 1930, 331. See also Crossan 1988, 290; Henderson 2011, 200.

⁴⁴¹ See below chapter 3.3.

⁴⁴² Crossan 1988, 267, 292; Schaeffer 1995, 105; Foster 2010, 354, 502, 508.

⁴⁴³ Frey 2013, 171–172.

⁴⁴⁴ Koester 1980, 126; Crossan 1988, 23, 29–30, 265–267, 291–293; Dewey 1990, 107–108, 124.

literature.⁴⁴⁵ Verheyden argues that the Gospel of Peter does not provide anything substantially new to the character of Peter within the gospel tradition. Although the author of the Gospel of Peter has elevated Peter to the role of narrator, there is nothing in the extant verses that indicates that he attempted to give Peter a special role in the passion narrative. He is the spokesperson for the twelve, but this is a role he already holds in the canonical gospels.⁴⁴⁶ However, Peter's character is enhanced by his new role as an author of a gospel in the Christian tradition. The Gospel of Peter both relies on and enhances Peter's authority in a manner that is typical of the pseudepigraphical literature. The enhancement of Peter was probably the primary motive for the author to use Peter as the narrator, but in the light of the fragmentary evidence it is advisable to be cautious in drawing firm conclusions on the matter. It seems that the author tried to enhance the influence of this relatively late gospel through the use of pseudepigraphical authorship.

The twelve disciples

The final verse of the Gospel of Peter in the Akhmîm fragment is probably the beginning of a resurrection appearance narrative, but the fragment breaks off before the details of the apparition are described.⁴⁴⁷ The disciples take their nets and go to the sea, presumably the Sea of Galilee.⁴⁴⁸ This interpretation is supported by the appearance narrative in John 21:1–14. Both John and the Gospel of Peter provide a list of disciples who went to the sea with their nets. However, the list of the disciples in the Gospel of Peter is different from the list of disciples in John 21:2. The list of disciples in John includes Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples. The Gospel of Peter also mentions Simon Peter first and then his brother Andrew, who is not mentioned in John. The third disciple in the Gospel of Peter is Levi, the son of Alphaeus.⁴⁴⁹ In the light of the call of the

⁴⁴⁵ Foster 2010, 91–96.

⁴⁴⁶ Verheyden 2007, 284–285.

⁴⁴⁷ Henderson 2011, 200.

⁴⁴⁸ Crossan 1988, 267; Henderson 2011, 201.

⁴⁴⁹ Crossan 1988, 292–293; Henderson 2011, 201.

tax-collector Levi son of Alphaeus in Mark 2:14, it is probable that the beginning of the last sentence ὁν Κύριος refers to this incident.⁴⁵⁰ The author of the Gospel of Peter mentions the twelve disciples of the Lord in the immediately preceding verse (Gos. Pet. 14:59) and it is likely that he intended to provide a list of twelve rather than seven disciples.⁴⁵¹

Koester argues that these differences indicate that the Gospel of Peter is not dependent on John.⁴⁵² The Gospel of Peter and John place Peter at the top of the list of the twelve disciples. Andrew is identified as the brother of Peter and placed after him in the list of disciples. In the lists of the twelve disciples in Matthew 10:2 and Luke 6:14 the relationship between Peter and Andrew is presented similarly. If the author of the Gospel of Peter intended to provide a list of twelve disciples, the influence of the lists of the twelve disciples in the canonical gospels might explain the placement of Andrew next to Peter. Levi is not mentioned in any of the lists of the twelve disciples in the canonical gospels. James the son of Alphaeus is mentioned in Mark's list of the twelve disciples (Mark 3:18). Some manuscripts state that Jesus called James the son Alphaeus in Mark 2:14, but none include Levi son of Alphaeus in the list of the twelve disciples in Mark 3:18. However, Origen mentioned that Levi was described as an apostle in one manuscript of Mark. In the first gospel the calling of Matthew, a tax-collector, is described (Matt. 9:9). Matthew is included in the list of the twelve disciples (Matt. 10:3).⁴⁵³ In other words, the manuscripts of Mark demonstrate that there was a tendency to bring together Levi son of Alphaeus and James son of Alphaeus, and in Matthew the tax-collector who is called by Jesus appears in the list of the twelve disciples. This motif could explain the inclusion of Levi son of Alphaeus in the list of the twelve disciples in the Gospel of Peter. Moreover, one of the main theses of this study is that the primary intention of the author of the Gospel of Peter was to solve the problems and contradictions of the canonical gospels. For example, the author presented a harmonizing tendency when he encountered the contradictory descriptions of Joseph of Arimathea and the

⁴⁵⁰ Foster 2010, 511; Henderson 2011, 202.

⁴⁵¹ Crossan 1988, 292.

⁴⁵² Koester 1990, 240.

⁴⁵³ Foster 2010, 510–511.

women of the passion narratives from the canonical gospels.⁴⁵⁴ If the Gospel of Peter's author had studied carefully the canonical gospels, he would have noticed that they provide slightly divergent lists of the twelve disciples. Therefore, I tentatively propose that the author of the Gospel of Peter attempted to harmonize the different lists of the twelve disciples in verse 14:60ff. However, this hypothesis can be sustained only if one accepts the overall thesis of this study.⁴⁵⁵

Conclusion

The Gospel of Peter's description of the disciples' activities between the death and resurrection of Jesus is a secondary expansion to the passion narrative. The description of the disciples in the Gospel of Peter shares several traditions with the fourth gospel, but these are not sufficient enough to establish a dependence between them. However, the overall evidence supports the conclusion that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew John. The author of the Gospel of Peter incorporated traditions of the disciples' hiding and mourning into his narrative. He possibly harmonized the different lists of the twelve disciples in the beginning of the appearance narrative, which seems to have been dependent on the parallel narrative of John. The author also used a first-person narrator and identified him as apostle Peter in order to legitimize his second century gospel. The expansion of the tradition continued a trajectory that had already begun in the canonical gospels. The verses that describe the disciples do not only fill in the gap in their activities, but present an internal apologetic for their behaviour. The strong emphasis on weeping and mourning accentuated the disciples' devotion to their Lord, the author of the Gospel of Peter attempting to defend the credibility of the disciples. Although the apology for the disciples is the main theme of verses 7:26–7:27, there are two other themes in these verses that connect them to the previous and following

⁴⁵⁴ See above chapter 3.2. and below chapter 3.4.

⁴⁵⁵ There is another tradition that might have influenced the author of the Gospel of Peter. Didascalia Apostolorum 5.14:14 contains a tradition that Jesus appeared to Levi. The author of the Gospel of Peter might have known the tradition behind Didascalia Apostolorum and decided to include Levi among the witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. (Crossan 1988, 293). Augustin 2014, 23 notes that in the Gospel of Peter the appearance to Levi and others seems to occur by the sea, but in the Didascalia Levi describes that it occurred in Levi's home.

narrative. The apology and polemic, which are the overriding concerns for the author in verses 7:26–7:27 and 14:58–14:59, are also included in the discussion of the temple and the resurrection that connect the description of the disciples' activities to the surrounding narrative. The disciples hide from the Jews who guard the tomb and their absence from the tomb refutes the accusation that the disciples stole the body of Jesus. The description of the disciples probably addresses the accusation that the disciples set the temple on fire. The real reason for the destruction of Jerusalem, the sins of the Jews against Jesus, are explicated in the previous verse. The author of the Gospel of Peter also created a negative portrayal of the Jews by transferring the fear of the Jews tradition to the empty tomb narrative. The apology and polemic are characteristic of the redaction of the Gospel of Peter throughout the extant narrative. This supports the conclusion that these verses are from the pen of the same author who composed the passion and resurrection narratives.

3.4. The empty tomb (Gos. Pet. 12:50–13:57)

12:50 Ὁρθρου δὲ τῆς κυριακῆς Μαριάμ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ, μαθήτρια τοῦ Κυρίου—φοβούμενη διὰ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους, ἐπειδὴ ἐφλέγοντο ὑπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς, οὐκ ἐποίησεν ἐπὶ τῷ μνήματι τοῦ Κυρίου ἃ εἰώθεσαν ποιεῖν αἱ γυναῖκες ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀποθνήσκουσι τοῖς ἀγαπωμένοις αὐταῖς—, 12:51 λαβοῦσα μεθ' ἑαυτῆς τὰς φίλας ἦλθεν ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον ὅπου ἦν τεθεῖς. 12:52 Καὶ ἐφοβοῦντο μὴ ἴδωσιν αὐτὰς οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ ἔλεγον· Εἰ καὶ μὴ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἧ ἑσταυρώθη ἐδυνήθημεν κλαῦσαι καὶ κόψασθαι, κἂν νῦν ἐπὶ τοῦ μνήματος αὐτοῦ ποιήσωμεν ταῦτα. 12:53 Τίς δὲ ἀποκυλίσει ἡμῖν καὶ τὸν λίθον τὸν τεθέντα ἐπὶ τῆς θύρας τοῦ μνημείου, ἵνα εἰσελθοῦσαι παρακαθεσθῶμεν αὐτῷ καὶ ποιήσωμεν τὰ ὀφειλόμενα; 12:54 Μέγας γὰρ ἦν ὁ λίθος, καὶ φοβούμεθα μὴ τις ἡμᾶς ἴδῃ. Καὶ εἰ μὴ δυνάμεθα, κἂν ἐπὶ τῆς θύρας βάλωμεν ἃ φέρομεν εἰς μνημοσύνην αὐτοῦ, κλαύσωμεν καὶ κοψώμεθα ἕως ἔλθωμεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον ἡμῶν.

13:55 Καὶ ἀπελθοῦσαι εὗρον τὸν τάφον ἠνεωγμένον· καὶ προσελθοῦσαι παρέκυσαν ἐκεῖ, καὶ ὀρώσιν ἐκεῖ τινα νεανίσκον καθεζόμενον ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ τάφου ὥραϊον καὶ περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λαμπροτάτην, ὅστις ἔφη αὐταῖς· 13:56 Τί ἤλθατε; τίνα ζητεῖτε; μὴ τὸν σταυρωθέντα ἐκεῖνον; Ἀνέστη καὶ ἀπῆλθεν· εἰ δὲ μὴ πιστεύετε, παρακύψατε καὶ ἴδετε τὸν τόπον ἐνθα ἔκειτο, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν· ἀνέστη γὰρ καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ἐκεῖ ὅθεν ἀπεστάλη. 13:57 Τότε αἱ γυναῖκες φοβηθεῖσαι ἔφυγον.

12:50 Early in the morning of the Lord's Day, Mary Magdalene, a disciple of the Lord – due to the fear of the Jews, who were inflamed with wrath, had not done at the tomb of the Lord what women are accustomed to do to their loved ones who have died – 12:51 took her female friends with her and went to the tomb where he had been laid. 12:52 And they feared that the Jews would see them and said: "Although we could not weep and mourn on the day he was crucified, let us do so now at his tomb. 12:53 But who will roll away the stone that has been placed at the entrance of the tomb, so that we might go in and sit beside him, and do what is appropriate? 12:54 For the stone was large and we fear that someone sees us. And if we cannot, let us place at the entrance what we bring in remembrance of him, and weep and mourn until we go to our homes."

13:55 And they went and found the tomb opened. They went to it and stooped in to have a look. And they saw there a beautiful young man dressed in a shining garment sitting in the middle of the tomb. He said to them: 13:56 "Why have you come? Who do you seek? Not the crucified one? He has risen and gone away. If you do not believe, stoop and look at the place where he laid, for he is not there, since he is risen and gone where he came from". 13:57 Then the women fled away frightened.

The empty tomb narrative is in some respects a unique section in the Gospel of Peter. In the empty tomb narrative the evidence of a literary dependence on the canonical gospels is more prominent than in any other section of the extant fragment. The verbal agreements are most extensive with Mark 16:1–8. There are also minor verbal agreements with the other three gospels, but many of these could be classified more accurately as thematic similarities rather than extensive verbal agreements. The verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter and Mark in the empty tomb narratives have convinced many scholars, who have rejected or questioned the Gospel of Peter's literary dependence on some of the canonical gospels or in other sections of the narrative, that a literary dependence exists between Mark and the Gospel of Peter.⁴⁵⁶ Crossan, who assigns most of the Gospel of Peter to the pre-canonical *Cross Gospel*, argues that the empty tomb narrative is dependent on Mark. He concludes that the author of the Gospel of Peter inserted two Johannine themes, the weeping of women and the fear of the Jews, into the Markan narrative structure.⁴⁵⁷ Neiryneck and Foster also reach the conclusion that the empty tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter demonstrates literary dependence

⁴⁵⁶ Harnack 1893, 33 who otherwise was uncertain of the Gospel of Peter's relationship to the canonical gospels, clearly states that in this section the Gospel of Peter is dependent on Mark.

⁴⁵⁷ Crossan 1988, 281–290. Crossan also regarded that the verb παρακώπτω in verse 13:56 is a sign of dependence on John 20:5.

on Mark.⁴⁵⁸ Henderson argues that the author of the Gospel of Peter has rewritten the Markan empty tomb narrative and was possibly influenced by Luke and John.⁴⁵⁹

Scholars do not agree whether literary dependence exists between the empty tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter and Mark. Koester argues that both Mark and the Gospel of Peter are dependent on a pre-Markan form of the empty tomb narrative. This pre-gospel tradition was known and used independently of each other by Mark and the author of the Gospel of Peter. Koester observes that the redactional features of Mark 16:1–8, the commandment to tell the disciples to go to Galilee and the exaggerated emphasis upon fear and astonishment, are absent in the Gospel of Peter 12:50–13:57.⁴⁶⁰ Dewey also argues that the removal of secondary expansions of the empty tomb narrative (Gos. Pet. 12:50b, 12:52a, 12:54a) leaves a very similar story in Mark 16:1–8 without the redactional verse 16:7. He concludes that the similarities between the two gospels are a result of independent use of the pre-canonical tradition.⁴⁶¹

Brown argues that the similarities and differences can be explained through secondary oral dependence. The author of the Gospel of Peter had heard or read the canonical gospels in the past, but was not working with the written copies while composing his own version. Brown does not see any reason for a direct influence of Mark.⁴⁶² Schaeffer examines some of the verbal agreements between the empty tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter and Mark in a case study. She argues that the verbal agreements consist of a few shared words which are not sufficient to support literary dependence between the two gospels.⁴⁶³

In the following I will examine the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels in the empty tomb narratives. The empty tomb narrative is the single most important section of the Gospel of

⁴⁵⁸ Neiryck 1989, 140–157; Foster 2010, 139–141.

⁴⁵⁹ Henderson 2011, 197–200.

⁴⁶⁰ Koester 1990, 238–239. Purchase of spices might also be included in this list. Koester did not exclude later editing of the empty tomb narrative in the Gospel of Peter. Cf. Johnson 1968, 25–34; Neiryck 1989, 144 n. 116.

⁴⁶¹ Dewey 1994, 121.

⁴⁶² Brown 1994, 1334–1335.

⁴⁶³ Schaeffer 1995, 125–135, 138–140, 170–176. See Verheyden 2002, 464–465, who criticises Schaeffer's arguments.

Peter in terms of its relationship with Mark. Therefore, in the source critical analysis of the empty tomb narrative I will concentrate on Mark in particular. I will argue that the extensive verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter and Mark in the empty tomb narrative demonstrate a literary dependence between them. Moreover, the changes and additions which the author of the Gospel of Peter has made also support literary dependence on the canonical gospels. The absence of the angel's message to tell the disciples to go to Galilee and the fact that the women do not inform the disciples of their experience at the tomb are a result of the deliberate redaction of the author who knew these narrative elements from the Gospel of Mark, but decided not to include them in his gospel. A redaction critical examination of the empty tomb narrative will show how the author altered the empty tomb narrative for apologetic and polemic purposes.

Literary dependence between Mark and the Gospel of Peter

Schaeffer has presented an argumentation against literary dependence between Mark and the Gospel of Peter. In a case study she examines the verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter 12:50–13:57 and Mark 16:1–8 through seven items.⁴⁶⁴ The first three items in Schaeffer's study are:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| (b) ἀποκυλίσει (Mark 16:3) | ἀποκυλίσει (Gos. Pet. 12:53) |
| (c) νεανίσκον καθήμενον (Mark 16:5) | νεανίσκον καθεζόμενον
(Gos. Pet. 13:55) |
| (d) περιβεβλημένον στολήν (Mark 16:5) | περιβεβλημένον στολήν
(Gos. Pet. 13:55) |

Schaeffer's approach to the verbal agreements presents a methodological problem. Elsewhere she criticizes studies which examine short phrases from the Gospel of Peter and argue that these demonstrate a literary dependence on the canonical gospels. She states that one or two individual words, often in a different form, do not establish literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. She claims that such a comparison is

⁴⁶⁴ The first item in Schaeffer's list is the wrapping of the body (*ἐνείλησεν τῇ σινδόνι*) which belongs to the burial pericope. It has been discussed above in chapter 4.2.

methodologically unwarranted. Schaeffer emphasizes that the focus should be shifted to examining whole sentences. This would reveal the apparent weakness in the hypothesis of literary dependence, because there are no extended verbal agreements between these gospels.⁴⁶⁵ In her own analysis, however, Schaeffer presents similar short phrases in order to argue against literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter and Mark. Moreover, she discusses examples (c) and (d) in a more extensive comparison between complete sentences of Mark 16:5–6 and the Gospel of Peter 13:55. Why does Schaeffer compare only short phrases when according to her own methodology the more extensive comparison provides more accurate conclusions? The examination of whole sentences reveals a close parallel between Mark 16:5–6 and the Gospel of Peter 13:55.

εἶδον νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκὴν, καὶ ἐξεθαμβήθησαν. ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐταῖς (Mark 16:5–6)
 ὁρῶσιν ἐκεῖ τινα νεανίσκον καθεζόμενον ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ τάφου ὡραῖον καὶ περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λαμπροτάτην, ὅστις ἔφη αὐταῖς (Gos. Pet. 13:55)

The exact verbal agreements consist of only four words and there are several minor changes and additions in the Gospel of Peter. The sentence begins with a present form ὁρῶσιν, while Mark has an aorist form εἶδον. The Gospel of Peter includes ἐκεῖ τινα before the shared νεανίσκον (καθήμενον/καθεζόμενον). In Mark the angel sits on the right side of the tomb (ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς), but in the Gospel of Peter he sits in the middle of the tomb (ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ τάφου). Both gospels use the same expression for the angel's garment (περιβεβλημένον στολὴν), which Mark describes using the adjective λευκὴν and the Gospel of Peter with λαμπροτάτην. The angel's message to the women begins with ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐταῖς in Mark and ὅστις ἔφη αὐταῖς in the Gospel of Peter. There are only four exact verbal agreements between Mark 16:5–6 and the Gospel of Peter 13:55. However, the structure of the sentences is identical. The exact verbal agreements and the above discussed minor differences appear in exactly the same order in both gospels. The examination of the whole sentence demonstrates the structural agreement between Mark

⁴⁶⁵ Schaeffer 1995, 120–121.

and the Gospel of Peter. When this fact is taken into consideration, the minor differences in vocabulary and content can be regarded as the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. Therefore, the most plausible explanation of the evidence in the Gospel of Peter 13:55 and Mark 16:5–6 is that there is a literary dependence between them.

It is helpful to compare the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter to Matthew's and Luke's redaction of Mark 16:5–6. Matthew has placed the empty tomb narrative in the middle of the guard at the tomb narrative and has completely rewritten the women's encounter with the angel who descends from heaven, rolls away the stone, and sits on it (Matt. 28:2). Matthew describes the angel's appearance as shining like lightning and his garments as white as snow. In Luke the women find two angels inside the tomb, but Luke does not specify their location within the tomb. Luke describes that the angels wore dazzling clothes. Matthew and Luke preserve less of Mark's content and vocabulary than the author of the Gospel of Peter.

Schaeffer divides verse 13:56 into items (e) and (g) and compares them to Mark 16:6 and Matthew 28:6. In the former item she mentions only the verbal agreement ζητεῖτε and in the latter the phrase ἴδετε τὸν τόπον (ὅπου) ἔκειτο. Schaeffer notes that Mark and the Gospel of Peter refer differently to Jesus as the crucified one. She also draws attention to the fact that in the Gospel of Peter the proper name Jesus is never used, but concluded that "the omission of the name tells us nothing about the use of the text of Mark."⁴⁶⁶ In the latter example Schaeffer excludes the verbal agreement οὐκ ἔστιν. It is again helpful to examine the whole sentences.

Ἰησοῦν ζητεῖτε τὸν Ναζαρηνὸν τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον (Mark 16:6)
τίνα ζητεῖτε; μὴ τὸν σταυρωθέντα ἐκεῖνον; (Gos. Pet. 13:56)

οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε, ἡγέρθη γὰρ καθὼς εἶπεν· δεῦτε ἴδετε τὸν τόπον ὅπου ἔκειτο.
(Matt. 28:6)
ἴδετε τὸν τόπον ἔνθα ἔκειτο, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν· ἀνέστη γὰρ (Gos. Pet. 13:56)

The change of the tense of the verb in the middle of extensive verbal agreements is not significant and the consistent replacement of the proper

⁴⁶⁶ Schaeffer 1995, 133.

name Jesus tells us how the author of the Gospel of Peter used his sources. Foster argues that the omission of ὥδε in the Gospel of Peter is a scribal mistake.⁴⁶⁷ If this interpretation is correct, it strengthens the verbal agreement between the Gospel of Peter and Matthew. In Matthew 27:64 the angel refers to the resurrection of Jesus with a passive verb form ἠγέρθη. In the Gospel of Peter 13:56 the active verb form ἀνέστη is used. The same verb appears in the Gospel of Peter 8:30 as well. It seems that the author of the Gospel of Peter preferred the expression that Jesus is risen. Therefore, the change from the passive to the active form reflects a deliberate redaction.

Another puzzling element in Schaeffer's study is that the extensive verbal agreements between Mark 16:3–4 and the Gospel of Peter 12:53–12:54 are discussed in another case study. The heading of the first case study Schaeffer lists all the verses of the empty tomb narratives of the Gospel of Peter 12:50–13:57 and Mark 16:1–8, but in practice she discusses only a single word ἀποκυλίσσει concerning the extensive verbal agreements between Gospel of Peter 12:53–12:54 and Mark 16:3–4 in the first case study.⁴⁶⁸ Extensive verbal agreements are discussed in another case study in another chapter.⁴⁶⁹ The division of the discussion creates an impression that the verbal agreements are less extensive than they actually are. It is methodologically more appropriate to examine the entire evidence together.

Τίς ἀποκυλίσσει ἡμῖν τὸν λίθον ἐκ τῆς θύρας τοῦ μνημείου; (Mark 16:3)
 Τίς δὲ ἀποκυλίσσει ἡμῖν καὶ τὸν λίθον τὸν τεθέντα ἐπὶ τῆς θύρας τοῦ μνημείου
 (Gos. Pet. 12:53)

ὁ λίθος, ᾧ γὰρ μέγας σφόδρα (Mark 16:4)
 Μέγας γὰρ ἦν ὁ λίθος (Gos. Pet. 12:54)

The verbal agreements between Mark 16:3–4 and the Gospel of Peter 12:53–12:54 are extensive. Schaeffer argues that these verbal agreements result from the fact that they became a fixed part of the tradition.⁴⁷⁰ However, both Matthew and Luke omitted the presumed fixed text, although they had it in

⁴⁶⁷ Foster 2010, 493.

⁴⁶⁸ Schaeffer 1995, 125–135.

⁴⁶⁹ Schaeffer 1995, 170–175.

⁴⁷⁰ Schaeffer 1995, 180.

front of them. Therefore, it is questionable to say that it was a fixed part of the tradition. Moreover, it is very unlikely that the empty tomb tradition was passed on in the form that has been preserved in Mark. This argument requires that the more popular Matthew would not have influenced the tradition of the empty tomb. Therefore, the logical conclusion is that the Gospel of Peter is literarily dependent on Mark in the empty tomb narrative. Moreover, only Mark and the Gospel of Peter explicitly mention that the stone was very large.⁴⁷¹ The most plausible explanation of the verbal agreements is a literary dependence. This conclusion is supported by the above-discussed extensive verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter and Mark in the burial pericope.

The extensive verbal agreements between Mark 16:1–8 and the Gospel of Peter 12:50–13:57 demonstrate a literary dependence between them. This conclusion can be supported by comparing the total number of verbal agreements between Mark's empty tomb narrative and Matthew and Luke. This approach requires a brief definition of the verbal agreements that are taken into consideration. I have included different forms of the same verb or noun as proof of verbal agreement if they are connected to other shared words in the texts or are placed in the same narrative setting.⁴⁷² I have not included single words that are placed in different contexts, even if they are an exact verbal agreement. One such example is the verb εἰσελθοῦσαι that appears both in the Gospel of Peter 12:53 and Mark 16:5. Neirynck cites this as a sign of literary dependence between the two texts.⁴⁷³ This verb, however, is placed in a slightly different setting in the narratives. It cannot be confirmed that this word was deliberately taken from Mark's narrative and used in another section of the narrative.⁴⁷⁴ The same holds true for the angel's command to women to look in the place where he was laid (ὅπου ἔθεκον

⁴⁷¹ Henderson 2011, 198.

⁴⁷² I examined the shared verbal agreements with different criteria. I included only exact verbal agreements that extended more than just one word. While this analyses produced strikingly different results in the absolute numbers of verbal agreements, the verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter and Mark were more extensive than between any other gospels in the empty tomb narratives.

⁴⁷³ Neirynck 1989, 146.

⁴⁷⁴ The issue is further complicated by the fact that Luke (24:3) also uses the expression εἰσελθοῦσαι.

αὐτόν) in Mark 16:6, which in the Gospel of Peter is placed at the beginning of the narrative in a slightly different form (ὅπου ἦν τεθείς).⁴⁷⁵

The above-mentioned criteria of verbal agreements produces the following results. There are 136 words in Mark 16:1–8. Matthew, who often preserves the vocabulary of Mark, shares 40 words with Mark in the empty tomb narrative. Luke, who is less faithful to Mark's text than Matthew, reproduces in the empty tomb narrative only 25 out of the 136 words that are in Mark 16:1–8. The Gospel of Peter has 38 words in common with Mark. In the empty tomb narrative the Gospel of Peter shares with Mark only two words fewer than Matthew and significantly more words than Luke. The logical conclusion from this comparison of the total amount of verbal agreements is that the Gospel of Peter is literarily dependent on Mark.

This conclusion is supported by the fact that the Gospel of Peter seems to presume the knowledge of all four canonical gospels. There are several examples of the vocabulary or content of the canonical gospels in the empty tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter.⁴⁷⁶ In verse 12:50 the women are said to have gone to the tomb (ἐπὶ τῷ μνήματι) early in the morning (ὄρθρου). Both of these expressions also appear in Luke 24:1. The expression ἐπὶ τῷ μνήματι is repeated in verse 12:52. The word that is used for the tomb of Jesus is τάφος in Matthew 28:1 and Gos. Pet. 13:55.⁴⁷⁷ It was mentioned above that verse 13:56 (ἴδετε τὸν τόπον ἔνθα ἔκειτο) seems to presume Matthew 28:6 (ἴδετε τὸν τόπον ὅπου ἔκειτο). The verb stoop (παρακύπτω) also appears in the empty tomb narratives in Luke 24:12 and John 20:5 and 20:11 is used in the Gospel of Peter 13:55 and 13:56.⁴⁷⁸ The Johannine theme of fear of the Jews (διὰ φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων) appears three times in the empty tomb narrative (Gos. Pet. 12:50, 12:52, 12:54). The weeping of the women is mentioned in the Gospel of Peter 12:52 and 12:54. The same motif appears in John 20:13 and 20:15. If the above-mentioned similarities are included among the verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels, the total number of verbal agreements between the empty tomb narrative of the Gospel

⁴⁷⁵ See Neiryneck 1989, 144.

⁴⁷⁶ Neiryneck 1989, 145 n. 118 lists other possible verbal agreement between Gospel of Peter 12:50–13:57 and the canonical gospels.

⁴⁷⁷ John's word for the tomb κήπος was of course used in verse 6:24 (see above chapter 4.1.).

⁴⁷⁸ Crossan 1988, 289–290; Henderson 2011, 198–199.

of Peter and the canonical gospels exceeds the number of verbal agreements between Mark's and Matthew's empty tomb narratives.

There are notable differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels in the vocabulary and content of the empty tomb narrative. These differences, however, provide interesting insights into the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. The following analysis will demonstrate that the author's redaction is so insightful that it presupposes a detailed knowledge of the canonical gospels. In the Gospel of Peter the women's discussion on the way to the tomb and the angel's message to the women have been completely rewritten. The author of the Gospel of Peter provided a new and more plausible reason for the women to go to the tomb on the morning of the Lord's Day and they do not receive advice to tell the disciples of the resurrection of Jesus. The examination of the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter explains the notable differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels, and more importantly, demonstrates how and why the author of the Gospel of Peter developed the empty tomb narrative.

The Lord's Day

One of the eye-catching features of the empty tomb narrative is a reference to the Lord's Day (κυριακή), which is used as a chronological marker at the beginning of a new scene. It is not only a chronological marker within the Gospel of Peter, but is also evidence of the date of composition of the Gospel of Peter. The canonical gospels refer to the first day of the week as the first day after the Sabbath (τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων). Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1 and John 20:1 share this form, but Matthew has a slightly different expression, τῇ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων. The Gospel of Peter reflects a development of the Christian tradition. Whereas the canonical gospels imply that the women who followed Jesus observed the Sabbath, regardless of what the practice at the time of the writing of the canonical gospels was, the Sabbath is not mentioned in the empty tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter. The author uses the term κυριακή, which does not appear in the canonical gospels. The change from the first day after the Sabbath to the Lord's Day indicates that there is a transition

from the Sabbath to Sunday observance in the Christian community. In other words, the Gospel of Peter is a witness to a growing distance from Judaism and to the formation of a Christian identity. This development also has implications for the date of composition of the Gospel of Peter.

It is not clear when the shift from Sabbath observance to Sunday observance occurred. The earliest reference to the first day of the week is found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. He advised the Corinthians to put something aside on the first day after the Sabbath (1. Cor. 16:2). Some have interpreted this to be a reference to a weekly Sunday gathering of the congregation. However, many aspects of the practice remain obscure. First, it is not clear whether Paul wrote about a weekly gathering. There is no advice to whom the money should be given or how to store the funds until Paul arrives. The impression is that each individual should proceed as he or she see appropriate. It is also possible that the men who were selected by the Corinthians to deliver the collection to Jerusalem were responsible for the safekeeping of the funds. Another possible reference to the Sunday worship in the first century is in Acts 20:7, but this passage is also ambiguous. If this verse refers to a Christian worship on Sunday, it probably stems from Luke's own time. The main argument against an early and apostolic decree on Sunday worship is that presumably it would have left more undisputed signs of the sources.⁴⁷⁹

The available evidence indicates that Sunday worship became more widespread at the end of the first century and at the beginning of the second century. The first undisputed reference to the Lord's Day (κυριακή ἡμέρα) appears in the Book of Revelation 1:10. Other early references to the Lord's Day are found in Didache 14:1 and in Ignatius's letter to the Magnesians 9:1. In the latter, Ignatius sharply contrasts the Sunday worship with Sabbath observance. Pliny's correspondence with Trajan also indicates that Christians had their own day for their gatherings.⁴⁸⁰

Another way to approach the Lord's Day in the Gospel of Peter is to look at the terminology used for the weekly day of worship in early Christian sources. Paul and Luke use the expression "first day of the week" (τῇ

⁴⁷⁹ Wilson 1995, 230–232.

⁴⁸⁰ Wilson 1995, 231–232.

μὴ τῶν σαββάτων), while later writers tend to prefer the Lord's Day (κυριακή ἡμέρα). In the Gospel of Peter the expression is simply κυριακή. First, this clearly places the Gospel of Peter in the same category as the later writings. Second, in the Gospel of Peter the word κυριακή is used independently. This implies that its use had become so common that the adjective had been turned into a substantive.⁴⁸¹ This development probably dates from a later period than the earliest attestations to the Lord's Day as a weekly day of worship. This development suggests that the Gospel of Peter was written after the first decades of the second century. It seems probable that the Gospel of Peter was used in a community that celebrated the Lord's Day on Sunday and had left the Sabbath observance behind. The redactional change concerning the chronological marker in the empty tomb narrative can be explained with the desire to bring the passion narrative into line with the community's practice.

Who were the women who found the empty tomb?

In the Gospel of Peter Mary Magdalene, a disciple of the Lord (μαθήτρια τοῦ Κυρίου),⁴⁸² took her friends with her and went to the tomb early on the Lord's Day (Gos. Pet. 12:50–12:51). The canonical gospels disagree with each other concerning the names of the women who found the tomb empty. The examination of the differences between the canonical gospels enables one to demonstrate how the author of Gospel of Peter attempts to solve the discrepancies of his sources. Mark narrates that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to the tomb on Sunday morning (Mark 16:1). Matthew does not mention Salome in the empty tomb narrative. In the first gospel Mary Magdalene and the other Mary are mentioned (Matt. 28:1). Luke mentions Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, but he replaced Salome with Joanna and also included other women with them (Luke 24:10). John mentions only Mary Magdalene in his empty tomb narrative (John 20:1). However, when Mary Magdalene tells Peter and the beloved

⁴⁸¹ Kirk 1994, 593.

⁴⁸² The author of the Gospel of Peter refers to Mary Magdalene as a disciple (μαθήτρια) of the Lord. This term appears in the New Testament only once. Tabitha is called a μαθήτρια in Acts 9:36 (Foster 2010, 462; Kraus 2013, 345–346.).

disciple that they have taken the Lord from the tomb, the fourth gospel has a plural form “we do not know” (οἶδμεν) where they have laid him (John 20:2).⁴⁸³

The passion narratives of the canonical gospels also name several different women who witnessed the death and burial of Jesus. Mark mentions Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Jose, and Salome, and other women witnessed the death of Jesus from a distance (Mark 15:40–41), and shortly afterwards Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Jose witness the burial of Jesus (15:47). Matthew mentions Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee among the women who witnessed the death of Jesus (Matt. 27:56), while only Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were present during the burial (Matt. 27:61). It was mentioned above that Luke includes the women who had come from Galilee among the followers of Jesus (πάντες οἱ γνωστοὶ αὐτῷ) who witnessed the crucifixion (Luke 23:49). Luke does not mention any of the women by name in the burial narrative (Luke 23:55). John does not mention the presence of women during the death or burial of Jesus, but Jesus’s mother, her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene are at foot of the cross (John 19:25).⁴⁸⁴

The canonical gospels have a notable number of different women in their passion narrative. The empty tomb narratives mention five different names and an unspecified number of other women. If Mary the mother of James and the other Mary are interpreted as the same person the different names are reduced to four. The canonical gospels do not agree with each other who found the empty tomb. If the death and burial pericopes are included in the examination, the diversity increases. Crossan argues that these discrepancies are harmonized in the Gospel of Peter. Mary Magdalene, who alone is included in all empty tomb narratives, went to the tomb. The differences between canonical gospels are harmonized by simply referring to the other women as friends of Mary Magdalene.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸³ Crossan 1988, 286; see Verheyden 2002, 470.

⁴⁸⁴ Foster 2010, 470.

⁴⁸⁵ Crossan 1988, 286.

The two above discussed examples of the author's redaction can be mentioned to support the conclusion that the author harmonized contradictions between the canonical gospels. In the narrative of Jesus's burial the conflicting descriptions of Joseph of Arimathea in the canonical gospels are harmonized by simply referring to him as a friend of Jesus (Gos. Pet. 2:3).⁴⁸⁶ I argued tentatively that the author of the Gospel of Peter intended to present a harmonized version of the lists of the twelve disciples (Gos. Pet. 14:60).⁴⁸⁷ In the light of these examples it seems probable that the author of the Gospel of Peter harmonized the discrepancies between the canonical gospels in the names of the women as well.

Why did the women go to the tomb on Sunday morning?

The empty tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter contains an elaborate description of the reasons why the women go to the tomb, how they plan to act there and what has prevented them for going to the tomb earlier. The author narrates that the women had not done the appropriate rituals at the tomb on the day of the crucifixion because they were afraid of the Jews who were inflamed with wrath. The women discuss with each other along the way to the tomb how they can enter the closed tomb and decide to at least mourn and weep at the tomb. The above discussed extensive verbal agreements between Mark and the Gospel of Peter in this section of the empty tomb narrative support a literary dependence between them. However, the author of the Gospel of Peter has created different motives for the women in visiting the tomb. I will argue that the purpose of this rewriting of the empty tomb tradition was to offer a more plausible explanation why the women went to the tomb on Sunday morning and also to describe the Jews in a polemical manner. The examination of the canonical gospels demonstrates that the evangelists struggled with the reason for the women going to the tomb on Sunday morning. The empty tomb narrative demonstrates how the author of the Gospel of Peter rewrites his sources.

⁴⁸⁶ See above chapter 3.1.

⁴⁸⁷ See above chapter 3.2.

In Mark 16:1 the women purchase spices and go to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus after the Sabbath. Carolyn Osiek has characterized this description as unrealistic:

“The reason given for their return, the unfinished anointing of the body, is highly suspect. It occurs only in Mark and Luke. In Mark, the end of the passion narrative offers no explanation why they could not finish the task on Friday, so that their reason for returning seems artificial. Moreover, reopening the tomb to anoint the body nearly two days later has been seen by most commentators as incredible.”⁴⁸⁸

There is another problematic feature in Mark’s description. The women know that the entrance of the tomb is blocked by a very large stone and they do not know how it is possible to anoint the body inside the tomb. They nevertheless decide to go to the tomb (Mark 16:3–4). Mark’s description of the women’s motives does not provide a plausible explanation why they went to the tomb on Sunday morning.

Matthew seems to have realized the problems in Mark’s empty tomb narrative. He does not mention that the women bought spices and went to the tomb to anoint the body. Instead he simply stated that the women went to see the tomb (Mark 28:1). In Luke the women prepared spices and ointments before the Sabbath. Luke also explains that the women rested on the Sabbath (Luke 23:56). In Luke the problem of anointing the body on Sunday remains. John has the closest parallel to the Gospel of Peter. They both share the theme of weeping at the tomb. Osiek claims that in John Mary Magdalene went to the sepulchre to mourn, just as she does in the Gospel of Peter.⁴⁸⁹ However, Osiek’s interpretation of John’s empty tomb narrative seems to be inaccurate. There is no evidence in John that Mary Magdalene went to the tomb to weep or to mourn. It is simply not stated why she, or they, went to the tomb (John 20:1). Later in the narrative when Mary Magdalene has returned to the tomb, she is weeping (John 20:11). This, however, is not the reason why she went to the sepulchre in the first place. In John the angels explicitly ask

⁴⁸⁸ Osiek 1993, 98; see also Schaeffer 1995, 171.

⁴⁸⁹ Osiek 1993, 99–101.

Mary Magdalene why she is crying. She replies that they had taken her Lord and she does not know where they have put him (John 20:13). Therefore, in John the motif of weeping is connected to the absence of the Lord's body. No reason is provided for Mary Magdalene's initial arrival at the tomb. The difficult question is evaded altogether.

In the Gospel of Peter the women decide to go to the tomb in order to weep and mourn. This is explicitly mentioned twice (Gos. Pet. 12:52, 12:54). In John 20:11–13 Mary Magdalene weeps at the tomb. In the Gospel of Peter the tradition of the weeping women of the fourth gospel has been transferred as the motive for their visit to the tomb. The reason for this redactional change seems to be that the author of the Gospel of Peter attempted to present a more credible motive for the women's actions.⁴⁹⁰ This becomes apparent when we take a look at the funeral culture of ancient Eastern Mediterranean. Lamenting at the tomb was an integral part of the burial ritual. This custom was shared by men and women, but it was associated especially with women.⁴⁹¹ Therefore, in the Gospel of Peter the women's arrival at the tomb has been rewritten to provide a more plausible narrative.

The author of the Gospel of Peter succeeded in creating a more plausible motive for the women to go to the tomb. The Gospel of Peter's description, however, is not only concerned with why, but also when the women went to the tomb. Why do they go to weep and mourn at the tomb on Sunday morning and not earlier? In the canonical gospels it is presumed that the women observed the Sabbath and Luke mentions this explicitly. The author of the Gospel of Peter distances Christians from the observance of the feasts and commandments of the Torah (Gos. Pet. 2:5 and 5:15). He also substituted the resting on the Sabbath with another reason for delaying the visit to the tomb until Sunday morning. The author of the Gospel of Peter claimed that the women could not weep and mourn at the tomb after the

⁴⁹⁰ In addition, the author of the Gospel of Peter prepared his narrative of the empty tomb earlier in his redaction of the burial periscope. By placing the request of Joseph directly after the trial of Jesus, he created ample time for Joseph to wash the body and give an honourable burial in every respect. Thus, he removed the awkward need for the women to return to the tomb to anoint the body far too late for all practical purposes.

⁴⁹¹ Osiek 1993, 102–103.

crucifixion because they were afraid of the Jews (Gos. Pet. 12:50, 12:52).⁴⁹² The hostility of the Jews prevented the women from doing what they were expected to do. This is an example of the tendency to describe the Jews in the worst possible light in the Gospel of Peter.⁴⁹³

This polemical explanation, however, created the problem why the women, who could not weep and mourn at the tomb on Friday evening (Gos. Pet. 12:50, 12:52), could do so on Sunday morning?⁴⁹⁴ The Gospel of Peter states that they are still afraid that the Jews will see them (Gos. Pet. 12:54), but the author does not provide an explanation why the fear of the Jews is no longer an obstacle for the women to visit the tomb. In the Gospel of Peter the resurrection of Jesus and the flight of the guards from the tomb have been narrated before the women arrive at the tomb. However, the internal logic of the narrative clearly implies that the women are unaware of the resurrection.⁴⁹⁵ Otherwise they would have known that there was no reason to fear the Jews, and the large stone was removed from the entrance of the tomb as part of the resurrection. Knowledge of this would of course make the whole motif of weeping and mourning at the tomb inexplicable. The outcome of this seems to be that, unaware of all that has happened, the women mysteriously decide to go to the tomb immediately after the resurrection had occurred and the guard at the tomb had left it, even though the reason that had prevented them earlier is still, according to the internal logic of the narrative, a present concern for them.

The inconsistent empty tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter can be seen as a combination of different traditions and their rewriting for apologetic and polemical purposes. The author of the Gospel of Peter combined two Johannine themes, fear of the Jews and weeping at the tomb, into Mark's narrative framework and annexed this developed version of the empty tomb narrative to the guard at the tomb story from Matthew. His effort was to create a plausible reason for the women to go to the tomb early on Sunday morning. The discussion of the women demonstrates how the author

⁴⁹² Crossan 1988, 286.

⁴⁹³ Brown 1987, 339; Foster 2010, 463.

⁴⁹⁴ Vaganay 1930, 318; Osiek 1993, 102. Verheyden 2002, 472 noted another inconsistency in the narrative. Joseph was allowed to bury the Lord, but the women were not allowed to mourn at the tomb.

⁴⁹⁵ Augustin 2014, 271.

of the Gospel of Peter also struggled with this issue. The aim of the author was to explain the motives and timing of the women's activity at the tomb. He managed to solve the questions why the women went to the tomb and why they had not done so earlier, but at the same time he failed to explain why the women decided to go there on Sunday morning. The rewritten Johannine motives of fear of the Jews and weeping at the tomb served his apologetic and polemic purposes, but their insertion into the Markan framework created an internal inconsistency in the narrative. Moreover, the following discussion will demonstrate that the author of the Gospel of Peter had an even more pressing issue to address which led him to use Mark as his primary source in the empty tomb narrative.

Women's role in the formation of the resurrection belief

Undoubtedly the most important role of the women in the empty tomb narratives of the canonical gospels is that they are the very first witnesses of the resurrection. Before Jesus appears to the disciples, the women have found the tomb empty and received an interpretation of its meaning from the angel (Mark 16:1–8, Matt. 28:1–8, Luke 24:1–10, John 20:1–2). In Matthew 28:9–10 and John 20:11–18 they are the first to see the Lord after the resurrection. They are, therefore, directly or indirectly the first witnesses to the resurrection.⁴⁹⁶ This prominent role of the women was a possible source of criticism against early Christians who lived in a patriarchal society. One of the disadvantages of women in antiquity was that their value as witnesses could be questioned or even disregarded on the basis of their gender. There has been an extensive discussion of the role of women as witnesses in antiquity and its implications for the empty tomb narratives.⁴⁹⁷ In this context it is not necessary to enter into a detailed discussion, and I shall instead only briefly point out the main lines and results of the debate.

An answer to the question of the credibility of women's testimony has mostly been examined in the light of Jewish legal decrees. The role of women as witnesses in a Jewish court was restricted. One commentator

⁴⁹⁶ Bauckham 2002, 257.

⁴⁹⁷ Osiek 1993, 103–104.

claims that as a general rule they were not eligible as witnesses.⁴⁹⁸ This view seems extreme since women could serve as witnesses in certain cases that concerned themselves and the domestic space. It is another question whether the sources (Mishna, Josephus) reflect the actual practices of first-century Palestine or the writers' own ideals of how things should be.⁴⁹⁹ Although women probably often served as witnesses, it should not be underestimated that in reality their testimony was prone to draw criticism.

The discussion of the reliability of women's testimony in Jewish courts is probably not the most relevant for the examination of the empty tomb narrative. The canonical gospels and a few other early Christian sources indicate that the women's testimony was not always believed even among the disciples. In Luke, after the women have received the message from the angel, they flee from the tomb and tell the disciples what they have just witnessed, although they are not believed (Luke 24:9–11). This tradition is repeated in the so called longer ending of Mark 16:9–20, where it is explicitly stated that Mary Magdalene told the disciples that Jesus lives and she has seen him but they do not believe her (Mark 16:11). Therefore, even in the Christian tradition the women's testimony of the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus is met with marked signs of disbelief.

The gender of the women who found the empty tomb probably created challenges for the Christian communities of first and second century, but it has to be remembered that a report of a resurrection is in itself an issue that invites some disbelief regardless of the gender or the reliability of the witness. The disciples are also depicted as not being able to convince their fellow brethren of the resurrection (John 20:24–25, Mark 16:13).⁵⁰⁰ Nevertheless, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the gender of the women who discovered the empty tomb was a difficult subject for some early Christians. This is most apparent in the second century *Epistula Apostolorum* 10, where the women's testimony is not believed by the disciples and their response is accompanied with a scornful note "What have we to do with you, o woman?" A balanced view on the matter seems to be that the gender of the

⁴⁹⁸ Bauckham 2002, 269. Bauckham 2002, 271–275 has also brought attention to Jewish texts that exhibit suspicion on women receiving a divine message against male priority.

⁴⁹⁹ Osiek, 1993, 103–104.

⁵⁰⁰ Bauckham 2002, 269.

women was not the only aspect, but it nevertheless was an aspect concerning the credibility of their message.⁵⁰¹ If Christians themselves were struggling with the issue of women as witnesses to the empty tomb and the resurrection, it is probable that critical outsiders were more than willing to point out that this feature of the Christian tradition did not meet the values of the patriarchy.

It is interesting to examine the women's role as witnesses in the Gospel of Peter against this background. In the Gospel of Peter they do not receive a message from the angel to tell the disciples of the resurrection and they do not tell their experience to the disciples. The disciples are still mourning when they have returned to their homes and go fishing on the Lake of Galilee (Gos. Pet. 14:59–14:60).⁵⁰² The Akhmîm fragment breaks off at this point, but the disciples presumably meet the risen Lord in the following verses.⁵⁰³ The author of the Gospel of Peter seems to have been consistent in excluding the women's report of the empty tomb to the disciples.⁵⁰⁴

The exclusion of the women's report to the disciples raises the question why the empty tomb narrative was preserved at all?⁵⁰⁵ Osiek has emphasized a critical point:

“the story of women at the tomb is still thought important enough to keep in the narrative, even though it seems to serve no purpose, neither first witness nor medium of communication to the other disciples. It can only have been included because it was so much a part of the Easter story that the redactor could not leave it out.”⁵⁰⁶

I agree with Osiek that the empty tomb narrative and the women's role in it could not be completely excluded. However, I do not agree that the empty tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter does not serve a purpose. The author of the Gospel of Peter skillfully rewrote the empty tomb tradition to retain its purpose. In the ancient context the canonical empty tomb narratives were vulnerable to criticism, because the women have a prominent role as the first

⁵⁰¹ Bauckham 2002, 269.

⁵⁰² Verheyden 2002, 477. See also Nicklas 2001, 321–322; Hartensetin 2007, 165; Augustin 2014, 274.

⁵⁰³ Crossan 1988, 290; Neirynck 1989, 147; see above chapter 3.2.

⁵⁰⁴ Crossan 1988, 290; Henderson 2011, 200.

⁵⁰⁵ Verheyden 2002, 478.

⁵⁰⁶ Osiek 1993, 102.

witnesses to the resurrection and the disciples learn of the resurrection from the women before their own witnessing. Therefore, critics could argue that the belief in the resurrection of Jesus was based on the testimony of the women. To solve this problem, the author of the Gospel of Peter rewrote the empty tomb narrative to avoid the criticism. In the Gospel of Peter the women are still witnesses to the resurrection, as they discover the empty tomb and the angel confirms the resurrection of Jesus. However, the angel does not instruct them to tell this to the disciples and the disciples are unaware of the women's experience at the tomb when they meet the Lord. In the Gospel of Peter the resurrection belief of the disciples is not based on the testimony of the women at all. They encounter the risen Jesus before receiving the women's message. The author of the Gospel of Peter preserved the empty tomb narrative in order to make it purposeless for the resurrection belief of the disciples.

Conclusion

The empty tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter was created mainly on the basis of Mark's empty tomb narrative. Two Johannine themes, weeping and the fear of the Jews, were added to Mark's framework. Matthew and Luke also influenced the composition of the narrative. In addition to the combination of these elements, the author of the Gospel of Peter developed the tradition further. In the Christian tradition the women played a significant role in the aftermath of the crucifixion of Jesus. The canonical gospels presented different names and a different number of women who found the empty tomb. The evangelists also had difficulties in explaining the reason for the women going to the tomb. The author of the Gospel of Peter reacted to the difficulties by rewriting the empty tomb narrative. The purpose of the author was to retain the women's role as witnesses to the empty tomb and the resurrection, but at the same time to exclude their testimony from the formation of the resurrection belief of the disciples. This explains why he preferred to follow Mark in this section, since among the canonical gospel Mark did not connect the women's experiences at the tomb to the resurrection belief of the disciples. The author of the Gospel of Peter also depicted the Jews as the enemies of the

story. These same apologetic and polemical features are present throughout the Gospel of Peter. Therefore, it seems probable that the empty tomb narrative was written by the same author.

3.5. Conclusion

The Gospel of Peter is dependent on Mark in the burial and empty tomb narratives. A literary dependence explains the extensive verbal agreements between them. These two gospels do not only share a significant amount of vocabulary, but the structure of several sentences which share extensive verbal agreements is identical as well. The attempts to explain the relationship through oral dependence fail to provide a more plausible explanation for the evidence. The minor differences in these sentences include characteristic features of the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. The author prefers to use the title Lord and the simple forms of verbs. He has also adjusted these narratives to other changes he has made to the passion narrative. Mark's burial and empty tomb narratives were the author's main sources in these pericopes, but he also inserted various traditions from other gospels into his description of the burial. There are notable traditions from John (the garden tomb, fear of the Jews, weeping and mourning) and Matthew (Joseph's tomb).

The author of the Gospel of Peter did not reproduce Mark's burial and empty tomb narrative, but rewrote important aspects of the narrative. Joseph's problematic identity was rewritten to explain how Jesus's body was handed over from his enemies to his friends. Joseph's request was relocated at the end of the trial in order to have more time for a proper burial. This allowed Joseph time to wash the body of the Lord and the burial tradition received another honourable feature. The author of the Gospel of Peter created a trial scene where King Herod and the Jews were the primary authority and therefore Pilate had to request the body from Herod. The author also created a motive for the crucifiers to hand over the body. The observance of the law provided an explanation why the crucifiers wanted to bury Jesus, but at the same time the author emphasized their sin in murdering the Son of God. The

Jewish people carry out the crucifixion and they hand over the body to Joseph. The author of Gospel of Peter harmonizes his anti-Jewish passion narrative and the canonical burial tradition.

In the empty tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter the contradictory lists of the women in the canonical gospels are harmonized. More importantly, the problematic reason for the women to go to the tomb is resolved. The women do not go to the tomb to anoint the body, but to mourn at the tomb. The author also changed the reason for their delaying in going to the tomb. The women did not observe the Sabbath, but feared that the enraged Jews might see them. However, the author of the Gospel of Peter failed to provide a plausible explanation why the women decided to go to the tomb on the third day. The most important redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter was to exclude the women as witnesses and even as messengers of the resurrection. This also explains why the author preferred Mark's empty tomb narrative, where the women do not tell the disciples of the resurrection. The author of the Gospel of Peter removed both the commandment of the angel to tell the disciples and the failure of the women to fulfil this commandment. The narratives of the women's report to the disciples in the other three gospels were omitted in the Gospel of Peter.

The analysis of the pericopes of the burial, the disciples and the empty tomb has revealed several characteristics of the redaction and use of sources of the author of the Gospel of Peter. The author seems to have followed one primary source in the analysed pericopes and has inserted various traditions from other sources into the narrative framework that is provided by the main source. The content of the gospels seems to have influenced the author's selection of his main source for these pericopes. In Mark's empty tomb narrative, the women have the least prominent role in the formation of the disciples' belief in the resurrection of Jesus and in John the disciples' flight is not as shameful as it is in the synoptic gospels. The author of the Gospel of Peter emphasized these features in his description of the disciples and the women. Therefore, it is probable that he chose as the main source of these sections the gospel that provided him with the best starting point to emphasize his intention.

The examination has also shown that apologetic and polemic are typical features of the author's redaction in the analysed pericopes. The anti-Jewish elements of the passion narrative are reflected in the burial narrative where the body of the Lord is handed from Herod and the Jewish people to Joseph. Herod replies to Pilate that they would have buried a *murdered* man and the Jewish people have carried out this murder. After the death of Jesus, the Jews are hostile towards the disciples and the women. A particularly interesting feature of the author's redaction is that the fear of the Jews is transferred to the empty tomb narrative. This underlines the negative character of the Jews and defends the honour of the disciples. The behaviour of the disciples is characterized in the best possible light. Moreover, they receive an appearance directly from the Lord before the women have told them of the empty tomb and the angel's message. The author of the Gospel of Peter also attempts to solve the problematic and contradictory traditions of the canonical gospels. The problematic identity of Joseph is resolved in the Gospel of Peter. The contradictory names of the women and the list of the twelve disciples are harmonized. Joseph's request to receive the Lord's body is relocated in order to provide more time for an honourable burial. The author provides a more plausible motive for the women to go to the tomb. In the following chapters I will examine whether the passion and resurrection narratives of the Gospel of Peter demonstrate similar features of apologetic and polemical redaction. I will also analyse whether there is evidence of a similar technique in the use of sources.

4. The resurrection

4.1. Introduction

“Gospel of Peter 8:28–11:49 forms the climax of the extant gospel: A Christ of gigantic dimensions emerges from the newly-opened tomb flanked by two huge heavenly beings. The moment of resurrection, which is actually witnessed by a party of Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders who have been guarding the heavily sealed tomb, is the gospel’s most distinctive feature.”⁵⁰⁷

The guard at the tomb narrative has been the most debated section of the Gospel of Peter. Johnson argues that the Gospel of Peter contains a more primitive form of the guard at the tomb narrative than the parallel narrative in Matthew 27:62–28:15. In Matthew’s version the epiphany of the narrative (Matt. 28:1–10) is mostly taken from Mark’s empty tomb narrative (Mark 16:1–8). The guard at the tomb and the empty tomb narratives are intertwined in the first gospel. The Gospel of Peter, however, has a consecutive resurrection narrative (Gos. Pet. 8:28–11:49), which is followed by a description of the women’s discovery of the empty tomb (Gos. Pet. 12:50–13:57). Johnson argues that the Gospel of Peter includes all the proper features of an epiphany narrative. He concludes that the resurrection narrative contains the original form of the narrative. Therefore, it is the earlier version of the same narrative, because the parallel narrative in Matthew does not preserve the genre of an epiphany narrative.⁵⁰⁸

Koester also argues that the resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter contains a very early epiphany narrative. He admits that there is no doubt that in the present form the resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter several features “are the result of secondary development”.⁵⁰⁹ The most elaborate of the secondary developments is the exoneration of Pilate in verses 11:46–11:49. The original epiphany narrative ended with the soldiers’ reaction to the resurrection (Gos. Pet. 11:45a) and their confession of Jesus as the Son of God (Gos. Pet. 11:45d). The soldiers report to Pilate (Gos. Pet. 11:45bc) is a later insertion which connects the primitive epiphany narrative and secondary

⁵⁰⁷ Schaeffer 1995, 34.

⁵⁰⁸ Johnson 1965, 8.

⁵⁰⁹ Koester 1980, 126.

elements together. The soldiers' counsel to report to Pilate the events at the tomb (Gos. Pet. 11:43) also belongs to the secondary developments of the tradition. The presence of Jewish leaders (Gos. Pet. 10:39b–10:40) and the visit of the Jewish people at the tomb (Gos. Pet. 9:34) are later insertions which attempt to include numerous witnesses in the narrative. Koester considers that the descent to Hades and preaching to the dead in the Gospel of Peter 10:41–10:42 are signs of the theological developments of the second century.⁵¹⁰ The descent of the third angel to the tomb (Gos. Pet. 11:44) after the resurrection has no function in the resurrection narrative. It is an interpolation that prepares for the women's discovery of the empty tomb (Gos. Pet. 12:50–13:57). The early epiphany narrative included the setting of the scene (Gos. Pet. 8:29–9:33), the resurrection (Gos. Pet. 9:35–10:40), and the witnesses' reaction to the resurrection (Gos. Pet. 11:45a,d).

The second part of Koester's thesis is that the early epiphany narrative was preserved in the canonical gospels, but Mark divided it into fragments, which have been inserted into different contexts during the ministry of Jesus. The epiphany itself appears as the transfiguration scene in Mark 9:2–8, even if it preserves only a very faint echo of the resurrection-epiphany, which is fully preserved in the Gospel of Peter. The centurion's confession of the epiphany narrative was clumsily integrated into the crucifixion scene in Mark, where it is a reaction to Jesus's death (Mark 15:39). The first part of the epiphany, the descent of the angel(s) from heaven, was used by Matthew in 28:2–4. Matthew's knowledge of the early epiphany narrative is apparent from the placement of the guard (Matt. 27:62–66).⁵¹¹

Crossan argues that the entire narrative in the Gospel of Peter 8:28–11.49 was part of the early passion and resurrection narrative. The only exceptions are the redactional verses 11:43–11:44, which prepare for the next scene.⁵¹² However, Crossan wrote in his earlier study *Four Other Gospels* that the version in the Gospel of Peter “has obviously emphasized the security and publicity of the tomb” and “is already freighted with apologetic and polemical overtones”, but he did not spell out if such elements should be considered

⁵¹⁰ Koester 1990, 233 n. 2.

⁵¹¹ Koester 1980, 129–130.

⁵¹² Crossan 1988, 284, 394. In his earlier book Crossan still considered that verse 9:37 was a inserted into the earlier narrative by the final redactor (Crossan 1985, 134).

later elaborations to the early narrative.⁵¹³ Crossan argues that Mark and Matthew knew the early epiphany narrative. Mark omitted most of this narrative and placed fragments of it into other contexts. Matthew reinstated most of the epiphany narrative into the Markan framework. Crossan presents a more detailed analysis of Koester's thesis that the resurrection of the Gospel of Peter was relocated to the transfiguration scene in Mark 9:2–9. The peculiarity in Crossan's thesis is that Luke and John knew the resurrection narrative, but disregarded it almost completely. Only a few minor elements of the resurrection narrative can be seen in the third and fourth gospel.⁵¹⁴

Dewey reconstructs verses 2:5c–5:15a, 5:16–6:21, 8:28b as the earliest layer of the Gospel of Peter. These verses form a story of the vindicated just one. The trial (Gos. Pet. 1:1–1:2), burial (Gos. Pet. 2:3–2:4, 6:23b–6:24), the tradition of the burial before sunset (Gos. Pet. 2:5a–b, 5:15b 6:22–6:23a), the fate of Jerusalem (Gos. Pet. 7:25) and the description of the disciples (Gos. Pet. 7:26–7:27), are later expansions of the passion narrative.⁵¹⁵

Brown defends the priority of Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative over the Gospel of Peter. The guard at the tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter shows familiarity with Matthew. The influence probably did not come through having a manuscript available to the author of the Gospel of Peter, but rather having heard Matthew being read and being influenced by Matthean expressions. The narrative of the Gospel of Peter was also developed in the oral transmission of the tradition. In this regard, Matthew is earlier than the Gospel of Peter. However, Brown argues that both gospels are dependent on an early and independent guard at the tomb narrative. Matthew had combined this narrative with Mark's empty tomb narrative. The author of the Gospel of Peter used or was familiar with an independent form of the guard at the tomb narrative. Brown's main argument for an early and independent version of the guard at the tomb narrative is that the Gospel of Peter contains the narrative in a consecutive form before the empty tomb narrative, while Matthew has intertwined these two originally separate

⁵¹³ Crossan 1985, 151–152.

⁵¹⁴ Crossan 1988, 335–403.

⁵¹⁵ Dewey 1990, 101–127.

narratives. Brown regards it as unlikely that the consecutive form of the guard at the tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter could have been created on the basis of Matthew. Brown's position here deserves to be quoted:

"[T]he author of the GPet drew not only on Matt. but on an independent form of the guard-at-the-sepulchre story, and in GPet 8:28–11:49 the basic story is still found consecutively (even if details in the story are modified by later developments)."⁵¹⁶

In other words, Brown argues that the Gospel of Peter contains a later guard at the tomb narrative than Matthew, because the latter had through oral transmission of the tradition influenced the former, and the narrative in the Gospel of Peter is more developed. The author of the Gospel of Peter knew a consecutive guard at the tomb narrative in addition to Matthew, because he retains the form of the early narrative. Matthew also knew the less developed form of the narrative. Both authors ultimately drew on the guard at the tomb narrative from this earlier consecutive narrative. This means that the consecutive form of the narrative is preserved in the Gospel of Peter.

Green's examination of the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and Matthew focuses on the similarities between the guard at the tomb narratives. He argues that the verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter 8:29–9:33 and Matthew 27:62–66 demand a literary dependence. The elaborate apologetic features in the Gospel of Peter are signs of the development of the tradition. Green concludes that these features prove the priority of Matthew. Therefore, the Gospel of Peter is literarily dependent on Matthew and preserves a more developed version of the guard at the tomb narrative.⁵¹⁷

In his article on the relationship between the canonical gospels and the Gospel of Peter, Kirk criticizes the arguments presented by Crossan and Koester to support the priority of the Gospel of Peter. Kirk proposes a diametrically opposite view to Crossan's thesis. He also rejects Brown's proposal of secondary orality and defends the position of literary dependence.

⁵¹⁶ Brown 1994, 1287.

⁵¹⁷ Green 1987, 293–301.

According to Kirk, there is no reason to postulate any other source behind the guard at the tomb narrative in the Gospel of Peter than Matthew. Kirk places an emphasis on the author's redaction in the formation of the notable differences between Matthew and the Gospel of Peter.⁵¹⁸ He produces a literary and redaction critical analysis of the centurion's confession (Gos. Pet. 11:45) and the guard at the tomb narrative (Gos. Pet. 8:28–11:49). He argues that the centurion's confession is secondarily placed within the epiphany story in the Gospel of Peter. The centurion's confession in the Gospel of Peter derives from Mark and Matthew.⁵¹⁹ Kirk concentrates on the guard at the tomb narrative, because it is vital for those who have argued for the priority of the Gospel of Peter over the canonical gospels.⁵²⁰ He also notes the apologetic interest in the story of the guard at the tomb that is further developed from Matthew's version.⁵²¹ Kirk does not exclude the influence of oral traditions and other source material, but he concludes that written copies of the canonical gospels were available to the author of the Gospel of Peter. He notes only briefly the existence of an independent guard at the tomb narrative.⁵²²

Schaeffer criticizes the form critical arguments of Koester and Crossan. She argues that the author of the Gospel of Peter expanded the guard at the tomb narrative. The author's attempts to provide proof for the resurrection can be seen in the increase of several apologetic motifs in the tradition. According to Schaeffer, Mark contains the original setting for the centurion's confession and does not show signs of secondary placement. In other words, Schaeffer set the results of the redaction critical study against the form critical studies. She does not regard the similarities of the transfiguration scene and the resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter to be significant enough to demonstrate dependence in either direction.⁵²³

Foster criticizes Brown's argument that the consecutive form of narrative requires another source in addition to Matthew. He argues that the author of the Gospel of Peter extracted the Markan elements from Matthew's

⁵¹⁸ Kirk 1994, 574.

⁵¹⁹ Kirk 1994, 583–586. Kirk argued that the Lucan confession is also preserved in a transformed form and location in the Gospel of Peter.

⁵²⁰ Kirk 1994, 574–575.

⁵²¹ Kirk 1994, 572.

⁵²² Kirk 1994, 580.

⁵²³ Schaeffer 1991, 499–507; Idem. 1995, 33–76.

guard at the tomb narrative because he knew the empty tomb narrative from Mark 16:1–8. He followed Mark in the empty tomb narrative and therefore extracted the Markan elements from the guard at the tomb narrative. The rearrangement of the guard at the tomb narrative was designed to emphasize the Jewish witnesses of the resurrection over the women's discovery of the empty tomb. Foster also argues that the Gospel of Peter also demonstrates more developed elements in the tradition.⁵²⁴

The question of the relationship between the guard at the tomb narratives of the Gospel of Peter and Matthew is not only a matter of different interpretations of the evidence, but to a great extent which methods should be applied or given priority in the analysis of the texts. Scholars who have applied form critical analysis have emphasized the consecutive narrative form of the Gospel of Peter and argued that it demonstrates the priority of the apocryphon's version. Scholars who have applied literary and redaction critical methods place greater emphasis on the more developed elements of the resurrection narrative in the Gospel of Peter as evidence of the priority of Matthew's version. Part of the dispute has been caused by the fact that some scholars have not taken the insights and implications of another method seriously enough. Scholars have not always discussed the results that the application of other methods has produced. They have rather supported their own case by selective use of a method.

Redaction critical analysis has offered support for the priority of Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative. The proponents of the early and independent epiphany narrative in the Gospel of Peter 8:28–11:49 have recognized that there are later additions in the guard at the tomb narrative. Crossan interprets that verses 11:43–11:44 are a later redactional scene preparation, which was included when the empty tomb narrative was added to the guard at the tomb narrative. However, even Crossan admits that there are apologetic elements in resurrection narrative. Koester and Dewey identify more extensive apologetic redaction in the guard at the tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter. Those who prefer the priority of Matthew have also emphasized the importance of the redaction critical method. Brown, Green,

⁵²⁴ Foster 2010, 133–137.

Kirk, Schaeffer and Foster argue that the Gospel of Peter contains several passages that are later than the parallel version in Matthew. The redaction critical analysis of the guard at the tomb narratives is especially problematic for Crossan's thesis. Koester and Dewey recognize that many of the proposed later developments do not belong to the early epiphany narrative. They have argued that these secondary expansions of the narrative do not exclude the embedded early narrative.

Form critical analysis has been the cornerstone of scholars who have proposed the priority of the Gospel of Peter. Brown also considers that the consecutive form of the narrative is earlier than Matthew. However, he does not consider what the implications of the presence of the original form of the guard at the tomb narrative in the Gospel of Peter were concerning the priority of Matthew. Green and Kirk, who used the literary and redaction critical methods, do not consider the possibility that the many apologetic features in the guard at the tomb narrative can be later expansions, but the form of the narrative may still demonstrate that the Gospel of Peter preserves an earlier form of the narrative than Matthew does. They do not engage in the discussion with the form critical analyses of the guard at the tomb narrative. Their use of literary and redaction critical methods leaves the possibility that the core of the tradition behind the account in the Gospel of Peter may be older than the one in Matthew, even though many elements in the narrative are later. Kirk critiques the reconstructed epiphany story, but he does not offer an explanation why the intertwined the guard at the tomb and the empty tomb narrative in Matthew were separated into two consecutive narratives in the Gospel of Peter. Schaeffer's proposal of a smoothing out of the passage seems unlikely in the light of Brown's concession that the original consecutive form of the narrative is preserved in the Gospel of Peter.

Another closely connected question is the content and extent of the proposed early epiphany narrative. If a hypothetical source behind the Gospel of Peter 8:28–11:49 can be convincingly reconstructed, its parallels with Mark and Matthew have to be explained. Despite their differences, the proponents of the early epiphany narrative reconstruct a narrative that includes at least verses 8:29b–9:33, 9:35–37, 10:39b–10:40 and 11:45d. The

transfiguration scene and especially the centurion's confession in the canonical gospels have parallels to this reconstructed narrative. If an independent and consecutive guard at the tomb narrative contained these traditions, are these traditions secondarily placed in Mark and Matthew?

Examination of the guard at the tomb narratives requires that the insights of the literary, redaction and form critical analyses are all taken seriously in the discussion. The following analysis attempts to meet this challenge. I will first examine the form critical discussion that has been presented to support the priority of the Gospel of Peter. This includes the difficult task of explaining the breaking of Matthew's intertwined form of the guard at the tomb and the empty tomb narratives into two separate units. I propose that it is not necessary to presume a separate and consecutive guard at the tomb narrative behind the Gospel of Peter or Matthew. The consecutive form of the guard at the tomb narrative in the Gospel of Peter has to be explained as secondary or it will be almost inevitable that some traditions in the apocryphal gospel are earlier than Matthew. Closely connected to this question is the theory of the relocated fragments of the epiphany narrative in Mark 9:2–8 and 15:39, and Matthew 28:2–4. I will analyse the relationship of the transfiguration scene and the centurion's confession with the Gospel of Peter. The detailed literary and redaction critical examination of the individual elements of the guard at the tomb narratives is carried after the form critical discussion. In the literary and redaction critical analysis the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels, especially Matthew, and the development of the narrative by the author of the Gospel of Peter is examined. I will argue that the Gospel of Peter is literarily dependent on Matthew and that the differences between them are a result of deliberate and meticulous redaction by the author of the Gospel of Peter.

4.2. The form critical discussion

Those scholars who have argued in favour of pre-canonical material in the Gospel of Peter have for good reason relied on the form critical argument of a consecutive guard at the tomb narrative. Crossan's argument is that the

Gospel of Peter is the source used by Matthew, while Johnson, Koester and Dewey argue that the removal of later elements reveals the early narrative. In both cases, the Gospel of Peter is based on a narrative that has its origins in the pre-Matthew tradition. This opens the door for the search of what elements are preserved in the narrative form of the Gospel of Peter that may hold a claim to be earlier than the canonical gospels. Although these scholars concede that the Gospel of Peter has gone through more or less extensive redaction, it seems almost certain that it would have preserved some parts of the early narrative. In such a case, it would have to be concluded that despite the many further expansions the Gospel of Peter contains the remains of a narrative that predates Matthew. This would lead to the re-evaluation of the dating of the material in the Gospel of Peter and its relationship to the canonical gospels. Therefore, it has to be examined how the guard at the tomb narrative in the Gospel of Peter is dependent only upon Matthew's version of the parallel narrative.

A proponent of the Gospel of Peter's dependence on Matthew, whether it is through literary or oral dependence, has to demonstrate how the guard at the tomb and the empty tomb narratives, which are intertwined in Matthew, developed into two separate narrative sections in the Gospel of Peter. Since it must be admitted that the narrative that holds the pure form of the narrative is earlier than a parallel narrative that does not, the burden of proof lies on the proponents of the priority of the canonical gospels. Regardless of the fact whether Matthew composed the guard at the tomb narrative or used a source for it, he combined this narrative with the empty tomb narrative that he received from Mark. In the Gospel of Peter these two narratives are not intertwined. The guard at the tomb narrative precedes the empty tomb narrative. Unless it can be convincingly demonstrated that the Gospel of Peter's form developed from Matthew, the relationship should be reversed or presumed to be connected through a common source behind both accounts.

Against this background, it is surprising how little attention the proponents of the priority of the canonical gospels have paid to this crucial point in the discussion of the formation of the Gospel of Peter. Green

discusses the parallels in the narratives, but does not take up the issue of form. Kirk mentions only in passing that “[T]here is some evidence that the guard at the tomb had a separate career”,⁵²⁵ but he does not discuss the issue and the implications that result from it. Brown is more frank in stating that both Matthew and the Gospel of Peter are dependent on a consecutive guard at the tomb narrative that they connected differently to the rest of the passion and resurrection material.⁵²⁶ Brown, however, does not consider the implications that if the Gospel of Peter has preserved the consecutive form of this narrative, a narrative that Matthew also knew, it could have preserved other elements that are also earlier than Matthew is.

Schaeffer disputes the assumption that a version of a narrative that preserves a particular narrative form and all the proper features of the narrative is self-evidently earlier than another version of the same narrative that does not meet these criteria. She argues that the development could also lead from a formally less satisfying version to a smoother and better-integrated narrative. Schaeffer supports her argument by presenting two comparisons from the canonical gospels. In the first case study, she compares the mockery and abuse scene in Mark 15:15–19 and Matthew 27:26–31. Matthew made redactional changes to the content and order of the scene. These have smoothed out the narrative into a chiasmic form. Similarly, according to Schaeffer, Matthew’s version of the guard at the tomb could have been reformulated by the author of the Gospel of Peter as a purer form of an epiphany narrative. The motive for this change could have been the storyteller’s interest in the miraculous.⁵²⁷

It is not self-evident that the author of the Gospel of Peter did not separate the guard at the tomb and the empty tomb narratives. However, it is self-evident that intertwining two separate narratives is more likely than the

⁵²⁵ Kirk 1994, 585.

⁵²⁶ Brown 1994, 1287.

⁵²⁷ Schaeffer 1995, 38–41. In his earlier article Brown 1987, 332 still held a similar opinion. He noted that “in the GP the combination is sequential rather than intertwined”, but continued that “none of that tells me whether the Matthean or the Petrine form of the guard story is more primitive or whether one work is dependent on the other.” Brown also claimed it impossible to know how much of the form of the narrative preexisted Matthew or the Gospel of Peter, because both narratives match the interests and tastes present elsewhere the gospels. In his later book Brown moved away from earlier position and his analysis of the form of the guard at the tomb narratives was closer the one presented by Koester. This change of opinion is one example of the difficulty in arguing for a thesis of smoothing out the Matthew’s narrative to the form it is in the Gospel of Peter.

opposite development. Matthew consistently smoothed out the rough Markan passages, but Schaeffer's example does not address the consecutive form of the narrative. Form critically, Matthew's empty tomb narrative is later than Mark's parallel account because it has been incorporated into the larger guard at the tomb narrative. Similarly, form critically Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative seems to be a later version of a narrative that did not include the elements from the empty tomb narrative. Only in a later phase were these two narratives attached together. If there existed a guard at the tomb narrative that did not include the empty tomb narrative, it would likely be Matthew's source or at least form critically closer to the common source. The Gospel of Peter seems to preserve such a narrative.

Smoothing out a single narrative unit is typical of redaction. It is another thing to first join two independent narratives into one work (Matt. 27:62–28:11) and then separate these two into another work that is dependent only on the narrative that has joined them to form again two independent narratives that preserve the original form of both narratives (Gos. Pet. 8:28–11:49). It is more plausible to argue that the author who preserved the independent form of the narratives knew them in an independent form rather than that he separated them. Schaeffer's example fails to demonstrate a case where two originally separate narratives were first joined together and later separated again. Schaeffer's example only underlines the peculiarity of such a procedure. The argument of a consecutive story remains, because "it is very difficult to assume that the author of GPet selected out elements from Matt's interwoven account, made a consecutive story out of it (8:28–11:49), and then prefaced it to the residual story of the women at the tomb (12:50–13:57)."⁵²⁸ Schaeffer's first example of the form critical argument moves on a general level and it is unable to offer a convincing example that supports Matthew's priority.

Schaeffer's first example fails to provide evidence that challenges the form critical argument presented for the priority of the Gospel of Peter, but her second example does in fact offer support for the opposite thesis. In the second case study, Schaeffer compares the composition of Jesus's trial and

⁵²⁸ Brown 1994, 1301.

the denial of Peter in Mark 14:53–71 and John 18:12–27. She points out that in Mark the two scenes are narrated in succession. The trial scene is presented in its entirety (Mark 14:53–65) before describing Peter’s denial (Mark 14:66–71). John on the other hand intertwined these two scenes. He begins with the trial (John 18:12–14), but then moves to Peter’s first denial (John 18:15–18). The trial continues to its conclusion (John 18:19–24) before Peter’s second denial is narrated (John 18:25–27). Schaeffer claims that on the basis of the form of the parallel narratives it would be impossible to say which gospel is the earlier one.⁵²⁹ It is true that the date of the narratives cannot be determined by simply examining the form of the narrative. The proponents of the priority of the Gospel of Peter have not claimed that the resurrection narrative does not contain later expansions. The form of the narrative reveals only that it is derived from an early narrative. From the outset, the interlacing of two separate narratives is a more plausible alternative than separating one narrative into two. This is more likely if there are known versions of the narrative where the separate narrative units have not yet been combined. If we discovered a gospel where the passion is told without Peter’s denial, it would be very difficult to argue that Mark, who presents the denial as separate from the trial, is a representative of a later phase in the development of the tradition than John, who has intertwined the trial and denial scenes. The form of the trial and denial narratives does however reveal that Mark’s form is more likely to be earlier than John’s.

If we compare these two gospels as an analogy to the empty tomb and the guard at the tomb narratives in Matthew and the Gospel of Peter, the form of the narrative supports the priority of the Gospel of Peter. Mark has two consecutive scenes like the Gospel of Peter, while Matthew has interlaced the two narratives like John. Mark is earlier than John and therefore Schaeffer’s analogy can be used to support the priority of the Gospel of Peter over Matthew. The support for this conclusion is even stronger if it is argued that John knew Mark. John would have had access to the two originally independent narratives and rearranged Mark’s composition. Schaeffer’s form

⁵²⁹ Schaeffer 1991, 56–57.

critical comparison produces support for the theory of independent and pre-canonical material in the Gospel of Peter.

The discussion underlines the difficulty in rejecting the form critical argument when two gospels are compared. How can the separation of the guard at the tomb and the empty tomb narratives by the author of the Gospel of Peter be explained if he only used Matthew as his source? I concede that the form critical argument supports the priority of the Gospel of Peter if the examination is carried out between the guard at the tomb narratives of Matthew and the Gospel of Peter. However, Foster's argument seems to provide the explanation for the removal of Mark's empty tomb narrative from Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative. The author of the Gospel knew the empty tomb narrative as a separate episode from Mark and decided to follow Mark in this regard. This directed him to edit Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative as well.⁵³⁰

I regard this as the crucial argument in the form critical discussion and I will now elaborate it further. I argue throughout this book that the author of the Gospel of Peter both knew and used Luke and John. They include the empty tomb narrative, but not the guard at the tomb narrative. This created a discrepancy between the sources of the author of the Gospel of Peter. The women could not find the tomb empty both when the guards were present at the tomb (Matthew) and when they were not (Mark, Luke, John). The narrative logic demanded that the author of the Gospel of Peter had to choose whether to follow the narrative outline of Matthew or of Mark, Luke and John in this regard.⁵³¹ Consequently, Mark's independent empty tomb narrative or Matthew's centrepiece of the guard at the tomb narrative, which is essentially Mark's empty tomb narrative, had to be omitted.

⁵³⁰ Foster 2010, 135.

⁵³¹ Luke and John have the same narrative outline in the empty tomb narrative as Mark. They have only expanded it with the visit of male disciple(s) to the tomb. In the Gospel of Peter this elaboration has been eliminated due to apologetic reasons (see above chapter 4.2.). At first glance John might be used to as an argument for a second visit to the tomb. It is true that in John Mary Magdalene does return to the tomb, but this is the result of the fourth evangelist's desire to introduce the two leading disciples of his gospel to the scene. The visit by Peter and the beloved disciple interrupts the otherwise consecutive narrative. Mary only retrieves them and without mentioning she has returned to the tomb to see the angels (John 20:11–14; cf. Mark 16:1–8) and the risen one (John 20:15–17; cf. Matt. 28:9–10). Without the verses 20:2–10 the narrative is very similar to the synoptic empty tomb narratives. This only underlines that the tomb is not found empty twice by the same persons.

The author of the Gospel of Peter had a pronounced interest in preferring Mark's empty tomb narrative. In the Gospel of Peter the women are excluded as witnesses to the resurrection. They do not meet the risen Christ and do not even receive any message from the angel to be mediated to the disciples. In the original ending of Mark, the empty tomb narrative ends with the note that the women did not say anything to anyone. This seems to have been the reason why he primarily preferred to follow Mark in the empty tomb narrative. By not having the angel give any message to women to pass on and by not allowing the women to report their experience to the disciples, the author effectively excluded them from the key role they play in the formation of the resurrection belief in the canonical gospels.⁵³²

In the Gospel of Peter the resurrection is described in detail. The author of the Gospel of Peter probably had access to an escorted resurrection tradition that described the resurrection of Jesus with two angels.⁵³³ The escorted resurrection tradition and the discovery of the empty tomb could not both form the middle section of the guard at the tomb narrative. The insertion of the escorted resurrection narrative into Matthew's guard at the tomb framework provided another reason to replace the empty tomb tradition after the guard at the tomb narrative.

The description of the resurrection further emphasized the need to remove the women from the guard at the tomb scene. The women were excluded from the guard at the tomb narrative, because in the Gospel of Peter it also functions as a resurrection scene. The guard at the tomb narrative was developed due to its apologetic value. Thus, the women are not the prime witnesses to the resurrection, as they are in Matthew. Instead, a group of hostile and neutral witnesses witness the resurrection. This offered the author a better opportunity to present an apology for the resurrection than the testimony of the unreliable women ever could. This led the author of the Gospel of Peter to rewrite the canonical narratives in a way that form critically looks like the earlier version, but is in fact a later and more developed version of the common tradition.

⁵³² See above chapter 3.3.

⁵³³ See below chapter 4.3.

There was an explicit reason for the author of the Gospel of Peter to separate the guard at the tomb and the empty tomb narrative from each other. This led him to rely on Mark in the empty tomb narrative and remove the parallel narrative from the middle of the guard at the tomb narrative, because it contained the element he wanted to avoid. Therefore, the form of the guard at the tomb and the empty tomb narratives of the Gospel of Peter does not demonstrate the use of a pre-canonical source. This thesis explains the formation of the consecutive guard at the tomb narrative in the Gospel of Peter without any other source than Matthew and the three other canonical gospels.

The discussion above has provided a plausible explanation for the form critical argument, which has been presented to support the priority of the guard at the tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter. The redaction critical examination of the guard at the tomb narratives has been used to support the priority of Matthew. At this point, I will only examine the redaction of the extensive middle scene in the guard at the tomb narrative (Gos. Pet. 9:35–10:42) as a whole. Details of the redaction will be analysed later. The hypothesis that Matthew knew and used a resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter, or an earlier form of it, demands that he disregarded the main feature of this narrative and instead chose to follow Mark's empty tomb narrative. This suggestion is necessary for the proponents of the priority of the Gospel of Peter, but it is very problematic in the light of Matthew's redaction elsewhere and the development of the resurrection traditions in general.

Matthew's redaction demonstrates an opposite direction than suppressing a resurrection narrative. He created Jesus's encounter with the women based on the Markan empty tomb narrative (Matt. 28:9–10). In the first gospel Jesus also appears to the disciples in Galilee and commissions them to baptize all the nations (Matt. 28:16–20). Miraculous events (earthquakes, tombs opening, resurrections, the star of Bethlehem) accompany the birth and death of the Messiah in the first gospel. On several occasions Matthew heightens the miraculous compared to his Markan source. Why would Matthew have been reserved about including the description of the resurrection of Jesus and the spectacular miracles of the resurrection

narrative? He did not shy away from these kinds of narrative features elsewhere. In fact, he endorsed them. Surely, he would have included such a narrative of the resurrection in his gospel as well, if he had known of such a narrative.⁵³⁴ Matthew's version "qualifies as the more difficult reading" and judged by this criterion it is the earlier one.⁵³⁵

Schaeffer has also noticed a discrepancy in the vocabulary of the narratives that is difficult to explain in the light of the theory of the Gospel of Peter's priority. On the one hand, the Gospel of Peter repeatedly emphasizes that the guards saw the resurrection by using perpetual verbs. Matthew on the other hand has preserved verbs of seeing only in the empty tomb narrative that is derived from Mark. It is a striking coincidence that the supposed epiphany narrative has not left traces of the guard seeing the angels' descent from the open heavens (Gos. Pet. 9:36–10:39) nor does it report their vision (Gos. Pet. 10:43–11:47) in the parallel sections of the narrative in Matthew. This further demonstrates that Matthew did not know the resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter or an earlier form of it.⁵³⁶

The development of the resurrection tradition points in a similar direction. It is impossible to present a detailed analysis of this development in the space available here. The following examples represent only the broad lines of the tradition, but they satisfy the needs of the present question. For our purposes, it is important to demonstrate that the whole trajectory of resurrection narratives moves steadily in a more extensive and detailed direction. It was mentioned above that Mark did not include any resurrection appearance, but already Matthew included two of them. Luke and John elaborate the appearances, but do not describe the actual resurrection. Sometime during the second-century resurrection appearances were added to the end of Mark on the basis of other canonical gospels. When the Gospel of Peter is placed within this trajectory, it seems to represent a more developed form of the tradition.

The description of the resurrection in the Gospel of Peter is more elaborate than anything preserved in the canonical gospels. The proposed

⁵³⁴ Brown 1987, 332, 336.

⁵³⁵ Schaeffer 1991, 41–42.

⁵³⁶ Schaeffer 1991, 42–45. See also Augustin 2014, 231.

consecutive narrative, which Matthew would have known, would have been written very early. Matthew's suppression of this narrative is not only against his own redactional preferences, but also against the development of the tradition that seems to consistently include more details and witnesses to resurrection. It is true that traditions do not develop smoothly in only one and chronologically irreversible direction. However, the thesis of a hypothetical early epiphany narrative is strikingly at odds with the development of the tradition. In the theory of Matthew's priority over the Gospel of Peter the redaction of both gospels fits nicely with the development of the tradition.

4.3. The guard at the tomb (Gos. Pet. 8:28–9:34)

8:28 Συναχθέντες δὲ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ πρεσβύτεροι πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἀκούσαντες ὅτι ὁ λαὸς ᾗπας γογγύζει καὶ κόπτεται τὰ στήθη λέγοντες ὅτι «εἰ τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ ταῦτα τὰ μέγιστα σημεῖα γέγονεν, ἴδετε ὅτι πόσον δίκαιός ἐστιν, 8:29 ἐφοβήθησαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι καὶ ἦλθον πρὸς Πειλᾶτον δεόμενοι αὐτοῦ καὶ λέγοντες· 8:30 Παράδος ἡμῖν στρατιώτας, ἵνα φυλάξωμεν τὸ μνήμα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τρεῖς ἡμέρας, μήποτε ἐλθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ κλέψωσιν αὐτὸν καὶ ὑπολάβῃ ὁ λαὸς ὅτι ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀνέστη, καὶ ποιήσωσιν ἡμῖν κακά. 8:31 Ὁ δὲ Πειλᾶτος παραδέδωκεν αὐτοῖς Πετρῶνιον τὸν κεντυρίωνα μετὰ στρατιωτῶν φυλάσσειν τὸν τάφον. Καὶ σὺν τούτοις ἦλθον πρεσβύτεροι καὶ γραμματεῖς ἐπὶ τὸ μνήμα. 8:32 Καὶ κυλίσαντες λίθον μέγαν μετὰ τοῦ κεντυρίωνος καὶ τῶν στρατιωτῶν ὁμοῦ πάντες οἱ ὄντες ἐκεῖ ἔθηκαν ἐπὶ τῇ θύρᾳ τοῦ μνήματος. 8:33 Καὶ ἐπέχρισαν ἐπτὰ σφραγίδας, καὶ σκηνὴν ἐκεῖ πῆξαντες ἐφύλαξαν. 9:34 Πρωΐας δὲ ἐπιφώσκοντος τοῦ σαββάτου, ἦλθεν ὄχλος ἀπὸ Ἰερουσαλὴμ καὶ τῆς περιχώρου ἵνα ἴδωσι τὸ μνημεῖον ἐσφραγισμένον.

8:28 The scribes, the elders and the Pharisees gathered together with one another after having heard that the whole people were murmuring and beating their chests, saying that if at his death these great signs occurred, look how just he was. 8:29 The elders became afraid and went to Pilate beseeching him and saying 8:30 Give us soldiers that we may guard his tomb for three days, lest his disciples come and steal him and the people suppose that he has risen from the dead and do us harm. 8:31 And Pilate gave them Petronius, a centurion, and soldiers to guard the tomb. And the elders and the scribes went to the tomb with them. 8:32 And they rolled a large stone at the entrance of the tomb with the centurion and the soldiers who were all there. 8:33 And they placed seven seals and having set up a tent, they kept watch. 9:34. And early when the Sabbath dawned, a crowd from Jerusalem and the surrounding area came in order to see the sealed tomb.

When was the guard placed at the tomb?

It was noted above that the extremely tight timeline of the passion narrative caused difficulties for the authors of the gospels. In all gospel accounts Jesus dies and is buried immediately before the Sabbath begins on Friday evening.⁵³⁷ Matthew and Luke remove Pilate's confirmation of the death of Jesus (Mark 15:44–45), and the author of the Gospel of Peter relocates Joseph's request for the body before the crucifixion in order to have more time for an honourable burial (Gos. Pet. 2:3–2:5a).⁵³⁸ The timeline of the passion narrative does not leave Matthew a possibility to avoid placing the guard at the tomb narrative on the Sabbath.⁵³⁹ This caused him considerable difficulties in presenting plausible actions for the Jewish leaders during the Sabbath. The beginning of the Sabbath was the first of the many difficulties that Matthew faced in writing the guard at the tomb narrative, the struggle with these difficulties leading to many ambiguities in the narrative. These ambiguities have caused scholars to disagree on what Matthew actually intended to say.

Matthew connected the guard at the tomb narrative to the passion narrative with a reference to the chronology of the events (Τῇ δὲ ἐπαύριον, ἥτις ἐστὶν μετὰ τὴν παρασκευήν). The chief priests and Pharisees request a guard from Pilate on the following day (Τῇ δὲ ἐπαύριον). It is not clear whether Matthew referred to the Friday evening after sunset or to the Saturday morning after sunrise. The problem is related to the question whether Matthew was following a Jewish or a Roman reckoning of time. Many scholars have proposed the latter,⁵⁴⁰ including Crossan in his earlier book,⁵⁴¹ though later he reversed his position.⁵⁴² The guard at the tomb narrative attempts to refute the accusation that the disciples stole the body of Jesus.⁵⁴³ If the request of the Jewish leaders was presented on Saturday morning, the tomb would have been unguarded overnight, and leaving a twelve-hour gap in

⁵³⁷ Crossan 1988, 268–270.

⁵³⁸ See above chapter 3.1.

⁵³⁹ Brown 1994, 1288.

⁵⁴⁰ Craig 1984, 274; Kirk 1994, 590; Schaeffer 1991, 505–506.

⁵⁴¹ Crossan 1985, 151–152.

⁵⁴² Crossan 1988, 268–270.

⁵⁴³ Craig 1984, 274–275, 278; Schaeffer 1991, 505; Luz 2001, 586.

the apology against the charge that the evangelist was attempting to refute. Matthew was undoubtedly aware of the Jewish reckoning of time. Would a skilled author like Matthew have so carelessly undermined his own efforts?⁵⁴⁴ Therefore, it seems probable that the phrase Τῇ δὲ ἐπαύριον refers to the Friday evening immediately after the burial. If Matthew nevertheless did intend that the chief priests and Pharisees requested the guard from Pilate only on Saturday morning, it would merely strengthen the case for Matthew's priority. The Gospel of Peter seems to place the request on Friday evening (see below). A transfer of the request from Saturday morning to Friday evening would have significantly improved the apology against the accusation of stealing the body.⁵⁴⁵

The Gospel of Peter does not explicitly mention the time when the scribes, Pharisees and elders gathered together (Gos. Pet. 8:28), but the flow of the narrative suggests that this happened on Friday evening.⁵⁴⁶ The first explicit chronological marker in the narrative appears in verse 9:34 when a Jewish crowd comes to see the sealed and guarded tomb early morning when Sabbath was dawning (Πρωῖας ἐπιφώσκοντος τοῦ σαββάτου). The dawning of the Sabbath could be interpreted literally as Saturday sunrise or metaphorically as sunset on Friday (see Gos. Pet. 2:5),⁵⁴⁷ but the reference to morning (Πρωῖας) shows that the author of the Gospel of Peter had the former in mind.⁵⁴⁸ Therefore, the request of the Jewish leaders had to be made on Friday evening or the early hours of Saturday.⁵⁴⁹ The gathering of the Jewish leaders, their request to Pilate, their arrival at the tomb, the closing and sealing of the tomb, and the pitching of a tent and the setting of a guard (Gos. Pet. 8:28–33) gives the impression of a Friday evening rather than a Saturday morning before dawn.⁵⁵⁰

The request of the Jewish leaders in the Gospel of Peter could still have occurred before the beginning of the Sabbath, but the whole activity of the Jewish leaders could hardly be squeezed into the narrow time span

⁵⁴⁴ See Schaeffer 1991, 504–506.

⁵⁴⁵ Schaeffer 1991, 506.

⁵⁴⁶ Crossan 1988, 268.

⁵⁴⁷ Brown, 1994, 1288; Schaeffer 1991, 506 n. 26.

⁵⁴⁸ Crossan 1988, 279.

⁵⁴⁹ Brown 1994, 1288.

⁵⁵⁰ Schaeffer 1991, 506.

between the burial and the beginning of the Sabbath. The author of the Gospel of Peter did not specify or seem to have been concerned which actions that occurred on the Sabbath. In his narrative, the Jewish leaders clearly break the Sabbath. They also spend at least a day and a night guarding a tomb during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Therefore, it seems unnecessary to speculate which of the actions in 8:28–8:33 happened before the beginning of the Sabbath, especially since the text does not give clear answers to this question.

Matthew demonstrates a notably different attitude to the Jewish leaders' Sabbath observance. He used an exceedingly rare circumlocution "the day after the day of preparation" (ἡ τις ἐστὶν μετὰ τὴν παρασκευὴν) to denote the Sabbath.⁵⁵¹ The day after the day of preparation is naturally the Sabbath, the language betraying the influence of Mark 15:42.⁵⁵² However, Mark's vocabulary was not the motive that influenced Matthew to avoid mentioning the Sabbath. It is likely that Matthew was aware of the problems in the logic of his narrative. The burial right before the Sabbath left no room for a request that would not lead to the breaking of the Sabbath.⁵⁵³ The issue is heightened by the fact that the request was made during the Passover.⁵⁵⁴ In John 18:28 the Jewish leaders refuse even to enter the praetorium to avoid becoming ritual impurity. Matthew did not draw attention to such issues.⁵⁵⁵ The avoidance of a reference to the Sabbath or to the feast of the Unleavened Bread does not indicate indifference to the questions they raise, but in fact the opposite. The inflexible timeline of the passion narrative forced Matthew to send the chief priests and the Pharisees to Pilate on the Sabbath during the Passover festivities against all plausibility.⁵⁵⁶ Matthew was well aware of this difficulty and he attempted to suppress this improbable feature in his narrative by using the circumlocution rather than explicitly mentioning the Sabbath.

The author of the Gospel of Peter depicts the Jewish leaders without any concern over their observance of the Sabbath or the Passover.

⁵⁵¹ Craig 1984, 274; Brown 1994, 1289.

⁵⁵² Crossan 1988, 268–270; Brown 1994, 1289; Luz 2001, 587.

⁵⁵³ Brown 1994, 1289–90; Luz 2001, 587.

⁵⁵⁴ Brown 1994, 1290 n. 10.

⁵⁵⁵ Brown 1994, 1289–90 n.10.

⁵⁵⁶ Another historically questionable feature is the co-operation of the chief priests and the Pharisees (Craig 1984, 275).

Brown claims that the author was ignorant of the Jewish practices.⁵⁵⁷ More likely, the author knew that Jews regarded approaching Pilate and especially their activity at the tomb on the Sabbath as a violation of the Torah. It is more probable that the author of the Gospel of Peter presented the Jewish leaders breaking the Sabbath. This depiction is in line with the author's redactional emphasis that was noted above. This is the first indication of the stark differences between the guard at the tomb narratives. Matthew showed a different regard for historical plausibility and struggled to provide plausible explanations for the actions of the Jewish leaders, while the author of the Gospel of Peter was unconcerned with such issues. Instead, he emphasized the negative image of the Jewish leaders. The author of the Gospel of Peter ignored Matthew's attempts to create a plausible guard at the tomb narrative and replaced it with an outspokenly polemical description. This redactional tendency becomes apparent time and again in the following analysis of the guard at the tomb narratives.

The gathering of the Jewish leaders

Matthew and the Gospel of Peter share an interesting verbal agreement in the description of the gathering of the Jewish leaders. Both use the verb συνάγω in the same context.⁵⁵⁸ The word is thoroughly Matthean. He uses it 25 times in his gospel, while in Mark, Luke and John it appears total of 17 times. The difference is even more pronounced in the passion narratives. The verb appears six times in Matthew 26–28 and only once in the other canonical passion narratives (Luke 22:66). Matthew uses συνάγω almost as a technical term for the co-operation of Jesus's opponents. Matthew 27:62 has a passive indicative form συνήχθησαν while the passive participle form συναχθέντες is used in the Gospel of Peter. The passive participle form is used in Matthew 28:1. Brown, who does not regard the Gospel of Peter as being literarily dependent on Matthew, nevertheless considers that this verbal agreement

⁵⁵⁷ Brown 1987, 339.

⁵⁵⁸ Vaganay 1930, 50.

indicates that the author of the Gospel of Peter “had heard Matt[hew] and was influenced by familiar Matthean expressions.”⁵⁵⁹

Another similarity between the Gospel of Peter and Matthew is that both include Pharisees among the Jewish leaders who gathered after Jesus’s death. The agreement is significant, because this is the only occasion in the passion narratives of Matthew and the Gospel of Peter where the Pharisees are mentioned.⁵⁶⁰ It would be a remarkable coincidence that the Pharisees would have been independently mentioned in exactly the same context and nowhere else. This supports a dependence between these gospels.⁵⁶¹

It is well known that in the pre-passion narrative Matthew regarded the Pharisees as Jesus’s main opponents. Brown proposes that this reflects the time when the gospel was composed. He argues that the Pharisees were the most outspoken critics of the Christian proclamation.⁵⁶² Therefore, it is probable that Matthew introduced the Pharisees into the guard at the tomb narrative. Crossan agrees that the inclusion of the Pharisees is Matthew’s addition to the guard at the tomb narrative. He argues that the original guard at the tomb narrative did not include the Pharisees. Matthew’s redaction was subsequently picked by the final editor of the Gospel of Peter.⁵⁶³ This explanation unnecessarily complicates matters and appears to be special pleading. Elements of Matthew’s redaction indicate that Matthew 27:62 has influenced the Gospel of Peter 8:28. Both extant versions of the narrative include the gathering of the Pharisees with the chief priests or the elders and the scribes. There is no evidence to support the claim that an early form of the narrative once existed that did not include them. The most plausible explanation is that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on Matthew.

The inclusion of the Pharisees in the gathering (συνάγω) of the Jewish leaders shows the similarities between Matthew and the Gospel of Peter. A difference between the two narratives is that alongside the Pharisees Matthew named the chief priests as the other Jewish leaders, while the Gospel

⁵⁵⁹ Brown 1994, 1289.

⁵⁶⁰ Brown 1994, 1289.

⁵⁶¹ The only other verse in the canonical passion narratives that includes the Pharisees is John 18:3.

⁵⁶² Brown 1994, 1289.

⁵⁶³ Crossan 1988, 270.

of Peter mentioned the scribes and the elders. It is likely that the author of the Gospel of Peter deliberately replaced the chief priests with the elders and scribes. In the canonical passion narratives the chief priests are Jesus's principal Jewish opponents. They are mentioned more often than all the other groups together and are omitted only twice when any of the Jewish groups is mentioned in the passion narratives. Other groups, on the other hand, are often omitted. Moreover, there are twelve examples when only one group of Jewish leaders is named in the canonical gospels. In eleven of the twelve examples, the chief priests are mentioned as the opponents of Jesus. The preference for the chief priests is a feature shared by all four canonical evangelists.⁵⁶⁴ This is a striking contrast to the Gospel of Peter where several Jewish groups are mentioned, though the chief priests do not appear in the passion or resurrection narrative at all.⁵⁶⁵

Matthew wrote his gospel a decade or two after the destruction of the temple. His gospel shows concern and awareness of the historical realities and the role of chief priests in Jesus's death. One example of this is that Matthew twice identifies the high priest as Caiaphas (Matt. 26:3, 26:57).⁵⁶⁶ The Gospel of Peter was written during the second century, probably in the latter half of the century. Brown has suggested that by this time the memory of the role of chief priests had faded in the Christian communities, which were increasingly drifting apart from their Jewish roots.⁵⁶⁷ I have argued that the author knew and used the canonical gospels as his sources and therefore had to be aware of their role in Jesus's death. In the second century the chief priests no longer formed the leading faction in contemporary Judaism and the elders and the scribes held a position of authority in the Jewish communities. Therefore, the most likely explanation for the author's preference of the elders and the scribes over the chief priests in the Gospel of Peter is that they formed the leadership of the contemporary Jewish communities at the time of the apocryphal gospel's composition. The author of the Gospel of Peter replaced the chief priests with the elders and scribes as Jesus's main opponents.

⁵⁶⁴ Crossan 1988, 262. See also Crossan 1988, 48–48.

⁵⁶⁵ Priests are mentioned in verse 7:25, but this may be due to the allusion to the temple in this verse.

⁵⁶⁶ Crossan 1988, 49.

⁵⁶⁷ Brown 1987, 338.

The trajectory of the tradition is consistent. The guard at the tomb narrative is a later expansion of the passion narrative. In the earlier phase of the tradition, Matthew introduced the Pharisees to the narrative alongside the chief priests, who were the main Jewish opponents of Jesus in the passion narrative. When the author of the Gospel of Peter developed the tradition further, the chief priests were eventually replaced altogether by the scribes and the elders who had become the leaders in the contemporary Jewish communities. Both Matthew and the Gospel of Peter demonstrate the tendency to insert new Jewish groups into the guard at the tomb narrative. In this regard, the Gospel of Peter has moved further than Matthew has and is likely represent a later phase in the development of the tradition.

The petition to Pilate

After the gathering of Jewish leaders and a brief exchange of words between them (Gos. Pet. 8:28), only the elders are said to have been afraid of the reaction of the people and they alone approach Pilate (Gos. Pet 8:29). The inconsistency in the description of different groups of Jewish leaders in the guard at the tomb narrative of the Gospel of Peter is remarkable. Without any explicable reason the scribes join the elders at the tomb (Gos. Pet. 8:31). At the end of the narrative, all Jewish leaders who had witnessed the resurrection at the tomb arrive after the Roman soldiers to see Pilate (Gos. Pet 11:47). Logically this would include the elders who had been present throughout the whole narrative and possibly the scribes who were also present at the tomb. However, the inconsistency in the narrative indicates that even Pharisees might be included among the Jewish leaders who returned to Pilate. This inconsistency does not seem to have any apparent motivation.

In verse 8:29b the Gospel of Peter shares a verbal agreement of three words with Matthew 27:62 (πρὸς Πιλάτον λέγοντες).⁵⁶⁸ The verbal agreement consists of extremely common elements and in the Gospel of Peter the sentence has been extended (πρὸς Πειλάτον δεόμενοι αὐτοῦ καὶ λέγοντες). It does not form a very strong case for literary dependence by itself. However,

⁵⁶⁸ Vaganay 1930, 50.

the previous and especially the following verse contains reasonably secure signs of literary dependence. Therefore, it can be argued that this is the case with verse 8:29b as well. The three-word verbal agreement adds to the cumulative evidence for the thesis of literary dependence.

Matthew and the author of the Gospel of Peter present completely different reasons why the Jewish leaders approached Pilate. In Matthew the chief priests and Pharisees refer to the words of Jesus. They tell Pilate that while Jesus was alive, he said that he would rise on third day (Matt. 27:63). It is not quite clear how the Jewish leaders have become aware of Jesus's prophecy. In Matthew, Jesus does not predict his resurrection in these words even to his disciples. The most likely explanation for their knowledge is the discussion of the sign of Jonah that is also witnessed by the scribes and the Pharisees (Matt. 12:38–40).⁵⁶⁹ The reference to Jesus's words is not included in the Gospel of Peter. In fact, the apocryphon does not provide any reason why the elders ask Pilate to guard the tomb for three days or why the disciples would steal the body during this time. The preserved evidence of the Gospel of Peter is fragmented and it does not enable the examination of the possible discussions Jesus had with the Jewish leaders. Matthew's description contains the confusing fact that the opponents of Jesus understood perfectly what Jesus meant with his words while his disciples seem to have remained completely ignorant.⁵⁷⁰ This might offer a possible explanation for the omission of Jesus's words in the Gospel of Peter. The author may have realized the discrepancy between the disciples' inability to understand the words of Jesus and the fact that they were perfectly clear to the Jewish authorities. However, this hypothesis goes beyond the available evidence. It can be accepted only as a part of the main thesis of this study that the author of the Gospel of Peter attempted to solve the contradictions of the canonical gospels.

Brown states that the historically improbable role of Herod in the trial is noticed and corrected by the author of the Gospel of Peter in the guard at the tomb narrative where Pilate is in charge.⁵⁷¹ A more likely explanation

⁵⁶⁹ Brown 1994, 1290.

⁵⁷⁰ Craig 1984, 276–277; Brown 1994, 1291, 1312.

⁵⁷¹ Brown 1994, 1341.

for the different descriptions of Pilate's role is the combination of different sources. On the one hand, in the trial the author of the Gospel of Peter drew on Luke's description of Herod's involvement. On the other hand, in the guard at the tomb narrative he followed Matthew who knew nothing of Herod's role in the passion narrative. The combination of different sources also explains why Herod is not mentioned in the guard at the tomb narrative. Instead, the elders, the scribes and the Pharisees approach Pilate.⁵⁷² In Matthew the chief priests and the Pharisees ask a guard from Pilate. It was argued above that the author of the Gospel of Peter replaced the chief priests with the elders and scribes. The author of the Gospel of Peter drew on Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative and did not consider how his description of the trial was related to the later events in the narrative. The discrepancy in the description of Herod, Pilate and the Jewish leaders between the different scenes demonstrates the combination of Lucan and Matthean traditions in the Gospel of Peter.

Lest his disciples come and steal the body

The Gospel of Peter and Matthew share a verbal agreement of eight consecutive words in the phrase μήποτε ἐλθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ κλέψωσιν αὐτὸν καὶ. This phrase is the most extensive consecutive verbal agreement between the Gospel of Peter and any of the canonical gospels. This verbal agreement has been emphasized as the prime example of literary dependence between Matthew and the Gospel of Peter.⁵⁷³ The proponents of secondary oral dependence have attempted to explain this verbal agreement in terms of oral transmission of the text. Schaeffer draws on the methodology developed by J. Vassina in his study of oral traditions. Schaeffer argues that Matthew 27:64 and the Gospel of Peter 8:30 demonstrate that this phrase was a fixed text that functioned as the lynchpin of the entire guard episode. The whole story is dependent upon this essential element.

⁵⁷² Augustin 2014, 217–218 also notes that it is striking that the Jewish leaders approach Pilate, but not Herod. The inconsistency of the narrative that results from a combination of several sources is a more plausible explanation than the complicated theory that Augustin constructs to hold the narrative consistency together (see above chapter 1.2.).

⁵⁷³ Green 1987, 300.

Anyone who had heard the story and then wished to retell it would have to include this sentence, *or one very like it*, in order to succeed in passing on the tradition.⁵⁷⁴

The fact is that the sentence is not something similar, but is exactly the same. The same tradition also appears in Justin's Dialogue with Trypho 108:2, which is a roughly contemporary text with the Gospel of Peter, but in a completely different genre. Justin presents the accusation of disciples stealing the body without preserving the verbal agreements. Why did Justin present such a different version of a text that was fixed in the oral tradition? This example demonstrates that in the second century the tradition could be transmitted without the suggested fixed text.

Schaeffer's work suffers from an unfortunate flaw in the application of the methodology derived from oral studies. After presenting the methodology developed by Vasina and the case study above, she used the same methodology to explain the verbal agreements between Mark 16:3 and Gos. Pet. 12:53. Of the eight words in Mark 16:3 seven appear in Gos. Pet. 12:53 and only a preposition has been changed though the meaning remains intact. Some additions, however, have broken the consecutive verbal agreement. The literary dependence is further supported by the problems that the women's question creates in the logic of the Gospel of Peter.⁵⁷⁵ According to Schaeffer, the women's question had "probably become a fixed text for those who retold the story".⁵⁷⁶ This claim did not withstand critical examination when the evidence of the synoptic gospels was taken into consideration. Neither Matthew nor Luke used this phrase from Mark's narrative. Schaeffer proposes that the question in Mark 16:3 was a fixed part of the oral tradition and that it survived over a half century in oral transmission. However, two evangelists who were literarily dependent on Mark, independently of each other did not consider it a necessary part of the narrative in the first century. The redaction of Matthew and Luke points in the

⁵⁷⁴ Schaeffer 1995, 169. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁷⁵ Schaeffer 1995, 170–171. For an analysis of the parallel see above chapter 3.4.

⁵⁷⁶ Schaeffer 1995, 171.

direction that they regarded it as “an illogical detail that was dropped in the retelling”.⁵⁷⁷ The application of the concept of a fixed text from oral studies fails to explain the parallel between Mark 16:3 and Gos. Pet. 12:53. It rather points in the direction of literary dependence between Mark and the Gospel of Peter. The fact that Schaeffer fails to explain the verbal agreement in this example indicates that a literary dependence also exists between Matthew 27:64 and the Gospel of Peter 8:30 as well.

The verbal agreement between Matthew 27:64 and the Gospel of Peter 8:30 is extensive enough that it can be cited as evidence for literary dependence by itself. The context offers further support for the literary dependence between the Gospel of Peter 8:30 and Matthew 27:64. The narratives are structurally similar; there is evidence of Matthean redaction (Pharisees, συνάγω) in the Gospel of Peter and these gospels also share a minor verbal agreement (πρὸς Πιλάτον λέγοντες) in the previous sentence. When the consecutive verbal agreement of eight words, in itself a strong indication of literary dependence, is placed in this context the burden of proof lies heavily on those who attempt to deny literary dependence. Schaeffer fails to demonstrate that the secondary oral dependence explains the verbal agreements.

A reason for Pilate

The Gospel of Peter and Matthew share an extensive verbal agreement in describing what would have happened if a guard had not been placed at the tomb of Jesus. The two gospels, however, present different outcomes of what would have happened if the disciples had managed to steal the body and claim the resurrection of Jesus.

καὶ εἵπωσιν τῷ λαῷ, Ἠγέρθη ἀπὸ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ἔσται ἡ ἐσχάτη πλάνη χειρῶν τῆς πρώτης (Matt. 27:64)
καὶ ὑπολάβῃ ὁ λαὸς ὅτι ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀνέστη, καὶ ποιήσωσιν ἡμῖν κακά. (Gos. Pet. 8:30)

⁵⁷⁷ Schaeffer 1995, 171.

In Matthew's version, the disciples would tell the people that Jesus has been raised from the dead. It is implied that when the disciples tell of the empty tomb, the people would believe in the resurrection of Jesus, because Jewish leaders argue the last deception would be worse than the first. The Gospel of Peter spells this out explicitly. In the Gospel of Peter the disciples do not say that he has risen, but the people suppose it.⁵⁷⁸ Another feature that seems to reflect the further development in the resurrection belief is the shift from ἡγέρθη to ἀνέστη to describe the resurrection.⁵⁷⁹ Matthew and the author of the Gospel of Peter consistently use these expressions of the resurrection (see Matt. 27:63; 28:6 and Gos. Pet. 13:56). This change from the divine passive ἡγέρθη to the active ἀνέστη can be seen as a reflection of the transition towards a higher Christology. In the earliest Christian sources, the resurrection of Jesus is always described by using the divine passive to emphasize that God raised Jesus. The idea that Jesus himself rose from the dead emerged only later.⁵⁸⁰ This further indicates the priority of Matthew's narrative.

The different emphasis in the redaction of Matthew and the Gospel of Peter is evident once again in the final arguments, which the Jewish leaders present to Pilate. Matthew formulated an argument that would sound reasonable to a Roman prefect. The chief priests and the Pharisees refer to the possible tumult in the crowds (Matt. 27:64). Therefore, the tomb should be guarded as part of securing overall safety, which would be in the interests of the Roman prefect. The author of the Gospel of Peter approached the request of the Jewish leaders from a completely different angle. In the Gospel of Peter the Jewish leaders ask Pilate to guard the tomb in order to prevent the people from doing them harm. Their request is motivated by their desire to secure their own wellbeing. This is an obvious attempt to depict the Jewish leaders as hypocrites and cowards. The only justification Pilate hears is that he should provide soldiers to guard the tomb because they, the leaders, are afraid. The question how this would have convinced a Roman prefect does not come up in the Gospel of Peter. Again, the narrative plausibility, which Matthew

⁵⁷⁸ Schaeffer 1995, 167.

⁵⁷⁹ Brown 1994, 1292.

⁵⁸⁰ Schaeffer 1995, 167–168.

attempted to reach, has been replaced in the Gospel of Peter by an overriding polemical stance against the Jewish leaders. This polemical redaction explains the differences in the content and the lack of verbal agreements in the latter half of the Jewish leaders' petition to Pilate.

The centurion Petronius

Despite the implausible request of the Jewish leaders, Pilate consents to their request, Pilate providing a company of soldiers and a centurion called Petronius (Gos. Pet. 8:31). The centurion is identified by name only in this verse, but altogether he is mentioned five times in the empty tomb narrative in the Gospel of Peter (8:31, 8:32; 9:38; 11:45, 11:47).⁵⁸¹ This is a striking contrast to Matthew's version where the centurion is not mentioned at all. This is a natural consequence of the ambiguity of the soldiers' nationality in Matthew (see below). If Matthew had mentioned the centurion, the soldiers would unequivocally have been Roman, therefore Matthew had a reason to omit the centurion, if this detail had been included in his source. The author of the Gospel of Peter had an equally probable reason for inserting the centurion into the guard at the tomb narrative, if he knew of Matthew's version of the guard at the tomb narrative. The presence of Roman soldiers offered neutral witnesses to the resurrection alongside the hostile Jewish leaders.

The centurion does not appear in Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative, but he has a prominent role in Matthew's passion narrative. Among the canonical gospels the role of the centurion is most pronounced in Mark and Matthew where he confesses Jesus as the Son of God (Mark 15:39, Matt. 27:54). In the Gospel of Peter the centurion's confession of Jesus as the Son of God appears in the resurrection narrative (Gos. Pet. 11:45). The influence of Mark in the Gospel of Peter can be seen in the fact that the Latin loan word *κεντυρίων* is used in the Gospel of Peter rather than the more common Greek equivalent used by Matthew and Luke.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸¹ Brown 1994, 1294.

⁵⁸² Brown 1994, 1294, 1327.

Another notable feature in the Gospel of Peter is the name of the centurion, Petronius. The canonical gospels do not include this detail. Crossan's thesis is that the evangelists knew this tradition, but decided not to include it in their gospels. It is true that in some cases the names of individuals are lost as the tradition is passed on. The analysis of the empty tomb narrative in the previous chapter demonstrated that only Mary Magdalene is mentioned by name in the Gospel of Peter, but the names of the other women were omitted.⁵⁸³ It is nevertheless more probable that the unnamed centurion acquired a name as the tradition developed. An example of this phenomenon is the unnamed Roman soldiers in Mark 15:16–19. The later tradition knows one of them as Longinus.⁵⁸⁴ The centurion's name in the Gospel of Peter moves along the same trajectory. Crossan's overall thesis is possible, but it collapses under the weight of the evidence. The problem is not that most of his proposals could not have happened. The problem is that when a vast number of unlikely redactional choices are needed to support a thesis, it loses plausibility. The name of the centurion is one example of evidence against Crossan's thesis.

The nationality of the soldiers

The question whether the guards are Jewish or Roman in Matthew has been widely debated among scholars. The Jewish leaders' request to have the tomb guarded and Pilate's answer Ἔχετε κουστωδίαν is ambiguous. The verb can be interpreted as an imperative or an indicative. In the former case, Pilate would have granted their request. In the latter, he would have in essence denied it.⁵⁸⁵ Although the former is possible on grammatical grounds, it is an exceedingly rare use of the verb. The latter on the other hand is very common. Therefore, some ambiguity remains in the interpretation of Pilate's answer, but the natural conclusion is that he denied the request of the Jewish leaders and told them to use their own guards.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸³ See above chapter 3.3.

⁵⁸⁴ Brown 1994, 1336.

⁵⁸⁵ Brown 1994, 1295–1296.

⁵⁸⁶ Crossan 1988, 271.

The problem with the most likely interpretation of Pilate's answer is that it does not add up with other elements in the narrative. The noun in the answer already begins to lead the interpretation in another direction. The *κουστωδία* is a loan word from Latin and the basic meaning of the word is a guard. Why would a Latin loan word be used of Jewish temple guards?⁵⁸⁷ An even stronger indication of Roman soldiers is the final scene of the guard at the tomb narrative. In this scene the guards are again described with the term *κουστωδία* (Matt. 28:11) and in the next verse the same guards are referred to as *στρατιώτης* (Matt. 28:12). Earlier in his passion narrative, Matthew had used the term *στρατιώτης* of Roman soldiers (Matt. 27:27). In the New Testament it is used mainly of Roman soldiers and never of the Jewish temple guards.⁵⁸⁸ The fact that *στρατιώτης* and *κουστωδία* are used to denote the same group, indicates that the *κουστωδία* in Matthew 27:66 refers to Roman soldiers.

The same ambiguity continues as the narrative unfolds. After the events at the tomb, the soldiers return to Jerusalem. They do not report to Pilate what they have witnessed, but to the chief priests (Matt. 28:11). Why would Roman soldiers report to Jewish leaders rather than the prefect? In the Gospel of Peter the Roman soldiers report directly to Pilate even though they are guarding the tomb with the Jewish leaders (Gos. Pet. 11:46).⁵⁸⁹ It could be argued that the Roman soldiers were handed over to the command of the Jewish chief priests. Therefore, the soldiers report to the authority they were directly responsible to at that particular time.⁵⁹⁰ This is certainly possible, but it seems a less plausible explanation than the interpretation that they were Jewish guards. Moreover, the soldiers report to chief priests, but they appear to be under Pilate's command (Matt. 28:14). The Jewish leaders would have had to reassure the guards that they were protected if the prefect had found out about their actions. This seems to make sense only if the guards are Roman soldiers.⁵⁹¹ Ultimately, the very existence of the request in the narrative seems to settle the case in favour of Roman soldiers. If Pilate had

⁵⁸⁷ Brown 1994, 1295; Luz 2005, 588.

⁵⁸⁸ Brown 1994, 1295.

⁵⁸⁹ Craig 1984, 274.

⁵⁹⁰ Brown 1994, 1295 n.23.

⁵⁹¹ Brown 1994, 1295.

denied the request for Roman soldiers to guard the tomb, the whole episode in the prefect's quarters would have seemed unnecessary.⁵⁹²

Regardless of which interpretation is held more plausible, the evidence clearly offers support for both interpretations. This raises the question why Matthew created such a vague description of the guards who guarded Jesus's tomb.⁵⁹³ The reason for Matthew's delicate balancing between two alternatives seems to be that both were problematic in their own way. It was already difficult to place the request of the Jewish leaders on the Sabbath and Matthew attempted to suppress the problematic feature with a circumlocution instead of an explicit reference to the Sabbath. A more serious breaking of the Sabbath and the presence of a Jewish guard near a tomb during the Passover festival was even more implausible for law observant Jews. Matthew attempted to avoid this implausible feature in his narrative.⁵⁹⁴ The presence of Roman soldiers also posed a difficult question concerning the plausibility of the narrative. Why would the Roman prefect hand over his soldiers under the authority of the Jewish leaders? Moreover, why would the Romans have posted a guard at the tomb of a man who they had just crucified? The conspiracy to suppress knowledge of the events at the tomb also presented problems for narrative plausibility. The bribe of the high priests placed the Roman soldiers under the threat of the death penalty.⁵⁹⁵ How could the chief priests have been able to convince the Roman prefect to bypass standard Roman military rules? The ambiguity of Matthew's narrative seems to reflect the unsatisfactory nature of both solutions. In the end, he seems to have settled in favour of the less problematic solution of Roman soldiers, but the signs of a struggle are apparent in the narrative.

The nationality of the soldiers in the Gospel of Peter is obviously Roman. The Jewish leaders ask soldiers to guard the tomb (Gos. Pet. 8:30) and Pilate gives them a centurion and soldiers (Gos. Pet. 8:31). The soldiers also report to Pilate after the resurrection (Gos. Pet. 11:45). The author of the Gospel of Peter did not reflect on what constituted plausible behaviour on the Romans' behalf. The primary purpose of the guard at the tomb narrative was

⁵⁹² Luz 2005, 588.

⁵⁹³ Crossan 1988, 271–272.

⁵⁹⁴ Luz 2005, 587.

⁵⁹⁵ Brown 1994, 1311.

to provide an apology for the resurrection and the Roman soldiers functioned as reliable witnesses in this narrative. The apologetic redaction dominates the guard at the tomb narrative in the Gospel of Peter, while Matthew struggled to provide a plausible guard at the tomb narrative. These different redactional motives of the authors explain why the nationality of the soldiers is described differently in the parallel narratives.

Apologetic elaborations

The Gospel of Peter has an elaborate description securing of the tomb. The elders and the scribes go to the tomb with the centurion and his soldiers and jointly they roll a large stone in front of the tomb (Gos. Pet. 8:32). The involvement of Jewish leaders at the tomb in the Gospel of Peter is another expansion of Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative. Koester considers that the presence of the Jewish leaders at the tomb is a late addition to the more primitive form of the story.⁵⁹⁶ In the Gospel of Peter the stone is enormous, requiring several Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders to place it at the entrance to the tomb. In the canonical gospels, including Matthew, Jesus's tomb is closed by Joseph of Arimathea. Matthew's narrative leaves the possibility that Joseph, a disciple of Jesus, had closed an empty tomb and taken the body away. In Matthew the soldiers only seal the already closed tomb and it is possible that they seal an empty tomb. In the Gospel of Peter this possibility of deception is excluded because the soldiers and Jewish leaders close the tomb together. Although this redactional change improves the apology of the guard at the tomb narrative, it also creates an absurd element in the narrative. Joseph carefully washes the body of the Lord and honourably buries it in his own garden tomb, only to leave the tomb open. There is no indication that Joseph had any knowledge of the closing of the tomb by the Roman soldiers and the Jewish leaders. The author of the Gospel of Peter attempted to enhance the apology of the guard at the tomb narrative

⁵⁹⁶ Koester 1990, 232–233.

by having Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders close and seal the tomb, but the consequences for the narrative logic were disastrous.⁵⁹⁷

The apologetic features are further elaborated in the sealing of the tomb. In the canonical gospels only Matthew has the tomb of Jesus sealed (Matt. 27:66). In the Gospel of Peter this element is heightened as Romans soldiers and Jewish leaders seal the tomb with seven seals (Gos. Pet. 8:33).⁵⁹⁸ The similarity with the seven seals of the Book of Revelation 5:5–1 is obvious, but it is difficult to demonstrate that the author of the Gospel of Peter intended to establish a connection to this text. Possibly the seven seals denote the highest possible security.⁵⁹⁹ The pitching of the tent and the guarding in turns (Gos. Pet. 8:33, 9:35) also function as apologetic elements in the narrative that emphasize the security of the tomb. These later expansions to the more original form of the narrative are not present in Matthew. They are consistent with the apologetic redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter and therefore probably originated from his pen.

A crowd from Jerusalem visits the tomb

In between the placement of the guard at the tomb (Gos. Pet. 8:28–8:33) and the resurrection (Gos. Pet. 9:35–11:44) is a brief comment that a multitude came from Jerusalem and the surrounding areas to see the tomb (Gos. Pet. 9:34). The visit of the crowd is a later expansion to the earlier form of the narrative. It is completely separate from the rest of the narrative. The crowd plays no role in the setting of the guard or the resurrection itself. Moreover, the parallel narrative in Matthew does not mention the crowd at all. Koester, a proponent of the priority of the Gospel of Peter, correctly concludes that the arrival of the crowd is one of the later expansions to the original narrative.⁶⁰⁰

The visit of a crowd of Jewish people at the tomb is another example that the author of the Gospel of Peter was not concerned with the observance of the Sabbath or the purity regulations during the Passover. He depicted the Jewish people breaking several commandments of the Torah. The

⁵⁹⁷ Kirk 1994, 589–590.

⁵⁹⁸ Brown 1994, 1296.

⁵⁹⁹ Kirk 1994, 591 n. 55; Brown 1994, 1295.

⁶⁰⁰ Koester 1990, 216–240.

author of the Gospel of Peter did not consider how the observance of the Law would have prevented the Jewish people, or leaders, from going to the tomb on the Sabbath. The purpose of the author was to emphasize the reality of the resurrection by having the people verify that Jesus was buried in a sealed and guarded tomb.⁶⁰¹ The analysis of 8:28–9:34 has shown that throughout the narrative the author of the Gospel of Peter attempted in every possible way to secure the tomb and ultimately offer proof of the resurrection. The close affinities with the redactional tendencies of the author of the Gospel of Peter, the indifference to the observance of the law, and the apologetic emphasis, suggest that the author of the Gospel of Peter created this expansion.

Craig proposes that the crowd remained at the tomb and witnessed the resurrection in order to increase the number of witnesses to the resurrection.⁶⁰² However, the narrative does not support this interpretation. Already the aorist tense of the verb (ἵδωσι) indicates that a brief visit rather than a longer stay at the tomb is intended. More importantly, this interpretation cannot be supported in the light of the whole narrative. At the end of the resurrection narrative, the Jewish leaders ask Pilate to order his soldiers to remain silent about what they have just witnessed. The leaders try to protect themselves from falling into the hands of the Jewish people to be stoned (Gos. Pet. 11:47–49). If the Jewish crowd had remained at the tomb to witness the resurrection this request would have been incomprehensible. The ability of the Jewish leaders to suppress the information shows that the people did not stay at the tomb. The internal logic of the narrative requires that the Jewish crowd only visits the tomb and leaves on the same day, even if this is not explicitly stated.

This interpretation, however, should not be pressed too hard, since the consistency of the narrative leaves many questions unanswered. The Jewish leaders' ability to suppress the truth is in contrast to the clearly noticeable divine signs involved in the resurrection. In the resurrection narrative the heavens are opened and a loud voice from heaven is heard. Then two men in shining brightness descend from heaven. After their emergence from the tomb, their heads are described as reaching up to heaven. Jesus's

⁶⁰¹ Neirynck 1989, 153–154. See also Augustin 2014, 224.

⁶⁰² Craig 1984, 278.

head reaches above the heavens. A voice from heaven asks if he had preached to the dead and receives an affirmative answer from the cross (Gos. Pet. 9:36–10:42). How did the author of the Gospel of Peter imagine that these events went unnoticed?

These tensions have implications for the compositional history of the Gospel of Peter. The contradiction in the narrative can again be explained with the combination of originally separate traditions. Crossan argues that the resurrection and the cover up are part of the same early narrative that he describes as a tightly closed narrative.⁶⁰³ However, the tension between the two sections of the narrative indicates that they contain material that did not originally belong together. The author of the Gospel of Peter drew the conspiracy from Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative, where the events at the tomb are more modest and are more easily overlooked. The miraculous resurrection narrative with all the highly noticeable elements was later inserted into the guard at the tomb narrative in the Gospel of Peter. When the miraculous resurrection narrative was secondarily connected to Matthew's anti-grave robbery narrative, it created the above-mentioned contradiction.

Koester and Dewey argue that the conspiracy (Gos. Pet. 11:46–49) did not belong to the early epiphany story that is embedded in the Gospel of Peter. They excluded these verses from the earliest narrative, because they attempt to exonerate Pilate.⁶⁰⁴ Their composition theory also avoids the above-mentioned contradiction, which supports the priority of Matthew. The innocence of Pilate is an emphatic feature in the Gospel of Peter's passion and resurrection narratives and was probably introduced into the narrative by the author of the Gospel of Peter. Although verses 11:46–49 do contain secondary expansions, the conspiracy was likely part of the original form of the guard at the tomb narrative and the description of the resurrection was later inserted into the narrative. Koester's and Dewey's theory requires that Matthew knew the early epiphany story, but replaced most of the resurrection narrative with the empty tomb narrative from Mark and added conspiracy narrative to its end. In a later phase this conspiracy narrative found its way into the Gospel of Peter along with other expansions to the original epiphany story. The theory

⁶⁰³ Crossan 1988, 21. Crossan 1988, xv also describes the text as upholding "narrative consistency".

⁶⁰⁴ Koester 1990, 216–240.

of Matthew's priority requires only that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew Matthew and expanded the guard at the tomb narrative with a description of a miraculous resurrection. The difficulty with the hypothesis of an alleged early epiphany narrative, which did not include the cover up, is that both extant versions include this tradition. The magnificent resurrection, the core of the alleged epiphany story, is only included in the Gospel of Peter. Occam's razor clearly favours Matthew's priority over the Gospel of Peter's in this regard. The anti-Jewish and pro-Roman elements in the narrative can be explained through the consistent redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter.

Conclusion

The setting of the guard at the tomb has extensive verbal agreements with Matthew. The Gospel of Peter and Matthew share a consecutive verbal agreement of eight words. Attempts to explain this verbal agreement by means of oral dependency theory fail to convince. There are also minor verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter 8:28–8:33 and Matthew 27:62–66. Typical features of Matthew's redaction and the structural similarities of the parallel narratives support literary dependence between the two gospels. The objection against the literary dependence is that the narratives present different vocabulary and shifts in details in the narrative. Matthew struggled to create a plausible narrative and this struggle left many ambiguous features in the narrative. The author of the Gospel of Peter ignored these problems and presented a straightforward apologetic and polemical narrative. The Gospel of Peter describes many very implausible actions by the Jewish leaders and people. The plausibility of the narrative has been sacrificed to create an anti-Jewish account. More importantly, nearly all of Matthew's content appears in the Gospel of Peter in a form that functions in the later second-century context. The ability to create detailed rewriting of the material indicated the use of a written source, the deliberate redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter explaining the differences between the narratives.

4.4. Resurrection of the Lord

9:35 Τῇ δὲ νυκτὶ ἡ ἐπέφωσκεν ἡ κυριακὴ, φυλασσόντων τῶν στρατιωτῶν ἀνὰ δύο κατὰ φρουράν, μεγάλη φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. 9:36 Καὶ εἶδον ἀνοιχθέντας τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ δύο ἄνδρας κατελθόντας ἐκεῖθεν, πολὺ φέγγος ἔχοντας καὶ ἐγγίσαντας τῷ τάφῳ. 9:37 Ὁ δὲ λίθος ἐκεῖνος ὁ βεβλημένος ἐπὶ τῇ θύρᾳ ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ κυλισθεὶς ἐπεχώρησε παρὰ μέρος, καὶ ὁ τάφος ἠνοιγῆ καὶ ἀμφότεροι οἱ νεανίσκοι εἰσῆλθον. 10:38 Ἰδόντες οὖν οἱ στρατιῶται ἐκεῖνοι ἐξύπνισαν τὸν κεντυρίωνα καὶ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους παρήσαν γὰρ καὶ αὐτοὶ φυλάσσοντες, 10:39 καὶ ἐξηγουμένων αὐτῶν ἃ εἶδον, πάλιν ὁρῶσιν ἐξελθόντας ἀπὸ τοῦ τάφου τρεῖς ἄνδρας καὶ τοὺς δύο τὸν ἕνα ὑπορθοῦντας καὶ σταυρὸν ἀκολουθοῦντα αὐτοῖς, 10:40 καὶ τῶν μὲν δύο τὴν κεφαλὴν χωροῦσαν μέχρι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, τοῦ δὲ χειραγωγουμένου ὑπ' αὐτῶν ὑπερβαίνουσιν τοὺς οὐρανοὺς. 10:41 καὶ φωνῆς ἤκουον ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν λεγούσης. Ἐκήρυξας τοῖς κοιμωμένοις; 10:42 Καὶ ὑπακοὴ ἠκούετο ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ ὅτι ναί. 11:43 Συνεσκέπτοντο οὖν ἀλλήλοις ἐκεῖνοι ἀπελθεῖν καὶ ἐμφανίσαι ταῦτα τῷ Πειλάτῳ. 11:44 καὶ ἔτι διανοουμένων αὐτῶν φαίνονται πάλιν ἀνοιχθέντες οἱ οὐανοὶ καὶ ἄνθρωπός τις κατελθὼν καὶ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὸ μνήμα.

9:35 And during the night when the Lord's Day dawned, while the soldiers were guarding two by two, a loud voice came from heaven. 9:36 And they saw the heavens opened and two men descending from there, having much brightness, and approaching the tomb. 9:37 But the stone that had been placed at the entrance of the tomb rolled by itself to the side and the tomb was opened and both young men went in. 10:38 Having seen this the soldiers then woke up the centurion and the elders, because they were also present there keeping watch. 10:39 While they were reporting what they had seen, again they saw three men coming out of the tomb and the two supporting the one and a cross following them. 10:40 And the head of the two reached up to heaven, but the one who was supported by them surpassed the heavens. 10:41 And they heard a voice from the heavens saying, "Have you preached to those who sleep?" 10:42 And a response was heard from the cross, "Yes." 11:43 Then they decided together to leave and report these things to Pilate. 11:44 And while they were still thinking the heavens were seen to open again and a certain man descended and entered the tomb.

Introduction

The most prominent element in the Gospel of Peter is the description of the resurrection. In the night of the Lord's Day, a loud voice comes from the heavens and the guards see the heavens opening. Two angels in great brightness approach the tomb, the stone rolls to the side by itself and the angels enter the tomb (Gos. Pet. 9:35–9:37). The canonical gospels do not contain a resurrection narrative. Parallels between them and the resurrection

scene in the Gospel of Peter are rather limited. Matthew 28:2 describes the descent of an angel from heaven to the tomb, but beyond that the narrative content or vocabulary are not shared by the two gospels. In Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative an angel of the Lord descends from heaven, rolls back the stone, and sits on it. The angel is described as shining like lightning and his garments are as white as snow (Matt. 28:1–3).

9:35 Τῇ δὲ νυκτὶ ἣ ἐπέφωσκεν ἡ κυριακὴ, φυλασσόντων τῶν στρατιωτῶν ἀνὰ δύο κατὰ φρουράν, μεγάλη φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. 9:36 Καὶ εἶδον ἀνοιχθέντας τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ δύο ἄνδρας κατελθόντας ἐκεῖθεν, πολὺ φέγγος ἔχοντας καὶ ἐγγίσαντας τῷ τάφῳ. 9:37 Ὁ δὲ λίθος ἐκεῖνος ὁ βεβλημένος ἐπὶ τῇ θύρᾳ ἀφ' αὐτοῦ κυλισθεὶς ἐπεχώρησε παρὰ μέρος, καὶ ὁ τάφος ἠνοίγη καὶ ἀμφοτέροι οἱ νεανίσκοι εἰσῆλθον.

28:1 Ὅψε δὲ σαββάτων, τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων, ἦλθεν Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Μαρία θεωρῆσαι τὸν τάφον. 28:2 καὶ ἰδοὺ σεισμὸς ἐγένετο μέγας· ἄγγελος γὰρ κυρίου καταβὰς ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ προσελθὼν ἀπεκύλισεν τὸν λίθον καὶ ἐκάθητο ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ. 28:3 ἦν δὲ ἡ εἰδέα αὐτοῦ ὡς ἀστραπὴ καὶ τὸ ἔνδυμα αὐτοῦ λευκὸν ὡς χιὼν.

In both gospels the second scene of the guard at the tomb narrative begins with the descent of the angel(s). However, the details are described differently and the relationship between the parallel narratives has been debated. Moreover, the narratives depart after the angel(s) have reached the tomb. In the Gospel of Peter the descent of the angels is part a of a resurrection narrative. After the descent from the heavens the angels accompany Jesus when he rises from the tomb and ascends to heaven (Gos. Pet. 10:38–10:40). The tradition of the escorted resurrection has a parallel in the Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah and the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae. These texts briefly describe the descent of the angels to the tomb and ascent to heaven with Jesus. The Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah 3:16–17 describes the descent-ascendto of the angels in the resurrection of Jesus.

And the watch of guards of the grave
And the descent of the angel of the church which is in the heavens, whom he
will summon in the last days;
And that the angel of the Holy Spirit
And Michael, the chief of the holy angels, would open his grave on the third
day,

And that the Beloved, sitting on their shoulders, will come forth,
And send out his twelve disciples,
And they will teach to all the nations and every tongue the resurrection of the
Beloved,
And those who believe in his cross will be saved,
And in his ascension to the seventh heaven, whence he came.

The Codex Bobiensis is dated to the fourth or fifth century. It is a representative of the Old Latin translation and a copy of a third-century archetype. The Greek text originated possibly in the second century.⁶⁰⁵ The Codex Bobiensis contains the following insertion in Mark 16:4:

But suddenly at the third hour of the day there was darkness over the whole circle of the earth, and angels descended from the heavens, and as [the Lord] was rising in the glory of the living God, at the same time they ascended with him; and immediately it was light.

The Ascension of Isaiah and the Codex Bobiensis are important textual witnesses to the escorted resurrection. The similarities between the Gospel of Peter, the Ascension of Isaiah 3:16–17 and the Codex Bobiensis 16:4 indicate that they are representatives of the escorted resurrection tradition, but a literary dependence between the texts is unlikely. The author of the Gospel of Peter did not create the escorted resurrection tradition, but rather drew on the same tradition as the Ascension of Isaiah and the Codex Bobiensis.⁶⁰⁶

In the Gospel of Peter the resurrection and ascension of Jesus are connected with the tradition of the descent to Hades and preaching to the dead. After the description of the resurrection, a voice from heaven asks “Have you preached to the dead” and the answer is “Yes” (Gos. Pet. 10:41–10:42). The preaching to those who are sleeping is yet another tradition, which is not included in the canonical gospels. The resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter has also been elaborated with a talking cross. The cross follows Jesus and the two angels as they emerge from the tomb and the response to the question from the heavens is heard from the cross (Gos. Pet. 10:39, 10:42). The second act of the guard at the tomb narrative concludes with the descent

⁶⁰⁵ Crossan 1988, 343; Henderson 2011, 176–177.

⁶⁰⁶ Crossan 1988, 344–345; Henderson 2011, 177–178. For a more detailed discussion see below.

of another angel to the tomb (Gos. Pet. 11:44). Crossan regards this is a later insertion into the guard at the tomb narrative. It is a redactional scene preparation for the empty tomb narrative where the women find the angel in the tomb.⁶⁰⁷

Descent of the angels

The resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter begins with a temporal clause in the night when the Lord's Day was dawning.⁶⁰⁸ Crossan and Koester argue that Matthew 28:1 is a conflation of Mark 16:1–2 and the Gospel of Peter 9:35.⁶⁰⁹ This is especially evident in the strange and awkward statement “late on the Sabbath” (ὄψε τῶν σαββάτων), “when the first [day] of the week was dawning” (τῇ ἐπιφωσκοθῇ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων).⁶¹⁰ Koester is not perfectly clear how he interprets these phrases. Late on the Sabbath presumably refers to the Saturday afternoon or evening before sunset. The strange expression and awkwardness of the combination indicates that the dawning of the first day of the week is firmly set on Sunday. Because late on the Sabbath cannot be at night, the latter phrase should be interpreted as following the epiphany story (Gos. Pet. 9:35).⁶¹¹

The time phrases ὄψε τῶν σαββάτων and τῇ ἐπιφωσκοθῇ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων can be understood either as late on the Sabbath when the sun was setting (about to set) or after the Sabbath at (towards) the sunrise of the first day of the week. Both interpretations are grammatically possible and provide no evidence for a combination of two contradictory sources. It seems unlikely that Matthew intended such an awkward combination of two time phrases as late on the Sabbath at the sunrise of the first day of the week, especially when more credible explanations are available.⁶¹²

If one nevertheless prefers to hold on to the interpretation of a contradiction in the time phrases in Matthew 28:1, the verse can still be explained more naturally as a redacted version of Mark 16:1–2 than as a

⁶⁰⁷ Crossan 1988, 24, 394.

⁶⁰⁸ Foster 2010 394; Henderson 2011, 161.

⁶⁰⁹ Crossan 1988, 352–355; Koester 1990, 236–237.

⁶¹⁰ Koester 1990, 236–237.

⁶¹¹ Kirk 1994, 592.

⁶¹² Kirk 1994, 591–592.

combination of Mark 16:1–2 and Gospel of Peter 9:35. Mark describes two different actions of the women. After the Sabbath, they buy spices and early Sunday morning they go to the tomb to anoint the body. Matthew dismissed Mark’s implausible motive for the women returning to the tomb on Sunday and therefore also the reference to buying the spices after the sunset on Saturday. He simply narrated that they went to see the tomb.⁶¹³ The Gospel of Peter has an epiphany scene during the night (τῇ δὲ νυκτὶ ἣ ἐπέφωσκεν ἡ Κυριακή). In Mark the women go to the tomb early in the morning of the first day of the week. There is no evidence to support that the combination of these two gospels led to change the night in the Gospel of Peter to the late Sabbath in Matthew. Moreover, the presence of Κυριακή in this verse supports a second-century date.⁶¹⁴

One of the differences between Matthew and the Gospel of Peter is that in the former one angel descends to the tomb, while the latter narrates a descent of two angels. The term for the angel(s) is also different. In Matthew an angel of the Lord descends from heaven, but in the Gospel of Peter two men approach the tomb (ἐγγίσαντας τῷ τάφῳ). In the canonical gospels Luke and John depict two angels in the empty tomb narrative. Luke calls them two men. While the influence of Lucan vocabulary and content is probable in the Gospel of Peter, the insertion of the tradition of two men into the guard at the tomb narrative requires a more comprehensive analysis of the resurrection scene. It is probable that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew the escorted resurrection tradition. At this point, I shall focus on the number of the angels. In the Ascension of Isaiah 3:16–17 the Beloved is sitting on the shoulders of two angels.⁶¹⁵ In the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae the number of angels is not specified, but the manuscript has a plural form (angeli). If the author of the Gospel of Peter knew the tradition of an escorted resurrection and this tradition included two angels, it would explain why he did not follow Matthew in the description of the descent of the angel. The author of the Gospel of Peter also knew that there were two angels in the empty tomb narratives of Luke and John. A convenient way to harmonize the different numbers of the angels in

⁶¹³ See above chapter 3.3.

⁶¹⁴ Foster 2010, 394–396; See above chapter 3.3.

⁶¹⁵ Crossan 1988, 342.

the empty tomb narratives was to place two angels in the resurrection narrative and one angel in the empty tomb narrative. This also explains the presence of Lucan vocabulary in the middle of the guard at the tomb narrative. In the Gospel of Peter 9:36 and Luke 24:4 the two heavenly beings are identified as two men (δύο ἄνδρες). Mark refers to a young man (νεανίσκος) in his empty tomb narrative. The same term is used of the two angels in the Gospel of Peter 9:37.⁶¹⁶ Crossan explains the content of Matthew 28:2 within the framework of his larger thesis of the whole of Matthew 27:66–28:15 as a conflation of the *Cross Gospel's* resurrection narrative and Mark's empty tomb narrative. Crossan argues that Matthew harmonized the *Cross Gospel's* two men descending from heaven with Mark's one young man to form a scene where one angel descends from heaven to the tomb.⁶¹⁷

The author of the Gospel of Peter could have just as well harmonized the descending angel in Matthew with Luke's description of the angels as two men and Mark's use of a young man in their empty tomb narratives. Crossan acknowledges this to a certain extent by arguing that the second-century redactor of the Gospel of Peter harmonized the different descriptions of the angel(s) in the canonical gospels.⁶¹⁸ Therefore, the narrative of two men, who are also called νεανίσκοι, descending from heaven to the tomb, is a harmonization of the synoptic gospels. This is a more likely explanation of the shared elements between the Gospel of Peter and the synoptic gospels.

The Gospel of Peter and Matthew disagree on how the stone was removed from the entrance of the tomb. In the Gospel of Peter the stone rolls to the side by itself. The stone that moves by itself enhances the miraculousness and vividness of the narrative.⁶¹⁹ In Matthew the angel rolls back the stone. The Ascension of Isaiah also presents the opening of the tomb as an act of the angels.⁶²⁰ Therefore, it is unlikely that this difference was

⁶¹⁶ Foster 2010, 401, 407. John also has two heavenly beings inside the empty tomb, but they are identified as angels (δύο ἁγγέλους). The Gospel of Peter does not use this word (Foster 2010, 402).

⁶¹⁷ Crossan 1988, 356.

⁶¹⁸ Crossan 1988, 25–26.

⁶¹⁹ Foster 2010, 398–403. In Matthew the angel rolls the stone from the door of the tomb. A closer parallel to the Gospel of Peter is in Matthew's depiction of the apocalyptic miracles after Jesus's death (Matt. 27:51–53). The tombs apparently opening by themselves. However, a connection between Matthew 27:52 and Gospel of Peter 9:37 is insecure at best (Foster 2010, 404).

⁶²⁰ Crossan 1988, 344–345.

derived from the escorted resurrection tradition. Henderson has presented an intriguing explanation for the difference. He noted that Celsus criticized the Son of God for not being able to open the tomb himself, but needed help (*Contra Celsum* 5.52). In the Gospel of Peter the stone moves by itself and even this possible objection against Christian claims is refuted.⁶²¹

Escorted resurrection

The descent of the angels offered very few hints of a dependence between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels, but the ascent of the angels with the resurrected Jesus in the Gospel of Peter does not have any connections with the canonical gospels. The canonical gospels do not describe the resurrection. They narrate only the discovery of the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus.⁶²² In the Gospel of Peter Jesus emerges from the tomb in the company of the two angels. The angels support Jesus with their hands. Their heads reached the heavens, but Jesus surpasses even the heavens (*Gos. Pet.* 10:39a-b–10:40). In the Gospel of Peter the resurrection is simultaneous with the ascension. The ascension is not explicitly described, but it is implied as the three men reach from earth to heaven.⁶²³ The parallel traditions in the Ascension of Isaiah 3:16–17 and the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae 16:4 also support this interpretation. In the Ascension of Isaiah it is recounted how the two angels will open the tomb on the third day and the Beloved will come forth sitting on the shoulders of the angels ascending to the seventh heaven. The Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae describes how the angels descend from the heavens and ascend with him as he was rising in the glory of the living God. In the former, the angels carry Jesus on their shoulder, but in the latter, they simply escort him. The Gospel of Peter emphasizes the support of the angels by depicting them as sustaining (τοὺς δύο τὸν ἕνα ὑπορθοῦντας) and leading Jesus by the hand (τοῦ δὲ χειραγωγούμενου ὑπ’ αὐτῶν).⁶²⁴ The description is not intended to show

⁶²¹ Henderson 2011, 188.

⁶²² For a description of these narratives see Henderson 2011, 165–166; See also Crossan 1988, 337.

⁶²³ Crossan 1988, 336, 344.

⁶²⁴ Crossan 1988, 342–344. The Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae mentions darkness which is implicit of the nocturnal setting in the Gospel of Peter 9:35 and 11:45. (Crossan 1988, 344.) The Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae does not explicate the descend-ascend of the angels on the third day, but this is obviously inferred from the context. See also Edo 2014, 215–217.

the weakness of Jesus, but as an act of devotion.⁶²⁵ All three texts contain different versions of the tradition that on the third day angels descended and escorted Jesus as he ascended to heavens. The tradition probably included two unnamed angels, but it is impossible to reconstruct the details of the earliest form of the tradition and the different stages in the development of the escorted resurrection tradition beyond this kernel. If the author of the Gospel of Peter knew an escorted resurrection narrative or tradition, this provided him with another reason to extract the empty tomb narrative from the guard at the tomb narrative.

One unique feature in the escorted resurrection tradition in the Gospel of Peter is the immense size of the angels and Jesus. The fact that the size of the Lord exceeds even that of the angels implies that his status was also greater than the two angels who are supporting him. The text implies some kind of a transformation of the three men. In the description of the descent of the angels their great brightness is mentioned, but in the ascension their immense size characterizes their appearance. This difference might indicate a combination of independent traditions. It is possible that the author of the Gospel of Peter drew primarily on Matthew's and Luke's descriptions in the descent of the angels, but in the ascension he is relying on a tradition of the escorted resurrection which emphasized the immense size of the angels. However, the other escorted resurrection texts do not mention the size of the angels and therefore there is no evidence that this was part of the escorted resurrection tradition. Moreover, Jesus has obviously been transformed from a suffering human figure into a heavenly being. The description of Jesus supports the conclusion that the angels' appearance has also been transformed.

Crossan has argued that "[t]he scarcity of extant mentions may well be a sign of its antiquity than of its novelty".⁶²⁶ Crossan argues that very early in the first century the *Cross Gospel* described the escorted resurrection. However, nobody seems to have picked up this tradition until the second century nor provided any description of the resurrection. His thesis is even more problematic because it presupposes that the four evangelists knew and

⁶²⁵ Foster 2010, 420–421.

⁶²⁶ Crossan 1988, 345.

omitted this tradition. The date and content of the escorted resurrection texts does not support this conclusion either. In the Ascension of Isaiah, Jesus is buried in a tomb, which is guarded. There are other indications of a later date as well. In the immediate context of the descent-ascent of the two angels at the resurrection quoted above, the author of the Ascension of Isaiah refers to “the torments with which the children of Israel must torment him” and the teaching of “all nations and every tongue”. The extant witnesses to the escorted resurrection tradition are later than the empty tomb and guard at the tomb narratives of the canonical gospels. The evidence does not support an early date for the escorted resurrection tradition. It is a second-century elaboration of the more modest descriptions of the discovery of the empty tomb.

Crossan also argues that the authors of the canonical gospels knew the resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter and that the traces of this tradition are residually visible in the canonical gospels.⁶²⁷ He argues that Mark relocated the resurrection narrative into the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2–8). Instead of the resurrection narrative Mark created the empty tomb narrative. The reason for the redaction was that Mark resented the victorious Christ and favoured suffering.⁶²⁸ The two men (Gos. Pet. 9:36) are identified as Elijah and Moses (Mark 9:4). The great brightness of the men (Gos. Pet. 9:36) becomes the glistening white of Jesus’s clothes (Mark 9:3) and the bodies that reach heavens and beyond (Gos. Pet. 10:40) become a high mountain (Mark 9:2). The voice from the heavens (Gos. Pet. 10:41) becomes the voice from the cloud (Mark 9:7).⁶²⁹

The motif of light is a very typical feature, almost a necessity, of an epiphany narrative. In the Gospel of Peter it is used to describe the appearance of the angels, but in Mark it is applied to Jesus’s clothing. The voice from heaven is a similar feature of the genre. A mountain is also a common setting for an epiphany, but the interpretation that the angels whose heads reached to the heavens are transferred to a high mountain is completely unconvincing. The two heavenly figures are only the same in number and this

⁶²⁷ Crossan 1988, 337.

⁶²⁸ Crossan 1988, 347–349.

⁶²⁹ Crossan 1988, 350.

may reflect the witness motif. The narratives of the descent of the angels share only typical features of an epiphany narrative and even these similarities have notable differences. The escorted resurrection and the transfiguration only share the elements of an epiphany genre, but there is not dependence between them.⁶³⁰

A Talking Cross

The talking cross is undoubtedly one of the most eye-catching features of the preserved fragment of the Gospel of Peter. A voice from the heavens asks “Have you preached to the dead” and the answer comes literarily from the cross (ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ). The tradition of the descent to Hades and the talking cross are incorporated into the escorted resurrection narrative. This interpretation is supported by the abrupt mentioning of the cross in the middle of the resurrection description. The cross that follows the two angels interrupts the description of the resurrection. Three men emerge from the tomb with the two of them supporting the third. The narrative continues by describing the appearance of the three men. The reference to the cross is placed in the middle of this description. It serves no purpose as a part of the description of the ascent to heaven. It prepares the question and answer of the preaching to the dead in verse 10:41–10:42. It seems that the traditions of the resurrection and descent to Hades were joined together only when the author of the Gospel of Peter placed them as the central piece of his guard at the tomb narrative. If the author of the Gospel of Peter had invented the tradition or formulated it freely on the basis of a belief of the Lord’s descent to Hades, he probably would have incorporated it more smoothly into the rest of his gospel. Moreover, the cross does not appear in the other texts that describe an escorted resurrection. Therefore, the preaching to the dead and the involvement of the cross in this process were probably part of the tradition that the author of the Gospel of Peter had received. If this interpretation is correct, the resurrection scene in the Gospel of Peter consists of separate pieces of tradition that the author has incorporated into the larger guard at the

⁶³⁰ Schaeffer 1995, 69–76.

tomb narrative. In any case, the inconsistencies in the narrative do not allow it to be described as “tightly closed narrative logic”.⁶³¹

Apologetic Redaction

The author of the Gospel of Peter combined originally independent traditions of the guard at the tomb, the escorted resurrection and preaching to the dead. In the Gospel of Peter the resurrection is not only described in great detail, but also the Roman soldiers and the Jewish elders witness the event at first hand. The differences in the accounts in the Ascension of Isaiah and Matthew, which mention guards at the tomb, are significant. The former simply mentions that the tomb was guarded. In the latter, the guards fall like dead men when the angel descends from heaven. Whether Matthew intended it or not, the narrative creates the impression that the guards do not witness the following events.⁶³² In the Gospel of Peter the soldiers guard the tomb in turns. After they have witnessed the descent of the angels, they wake up the centurion and the Jewish elders. They all witness Jesus emerging from the tomb with the two angels and the following cross.

As was noted above, Schaeffer has offered an excellent analysis of how the author of the Gospel of Peter uses perceptual verbs to emphasize the reliability of the resurrection narrative. A loud voice comes (μεγάλη φωνή ἐγένετο) from the heavens (Gos. Pet. 9:35) and the guards *saw* (εἶδον) the heavens open and the two angels approaching the tomb in great brightness (Gos. Pet. 9:36). After *seeing* (ἰδόντες) the stone roll by itself from the entrance of the tomb and the men entering the tomb (Gos. Pet. 10:38), they wake up the others to tell them what they *saw* (εἶδον) (Gos. Pet. 10:39). They all *see* (ὁρᾶσιν) the resurrection (Gos. Pet. 10:39–10:40) and *hear* (ἤκουον) the voice from the heavens (Gos. Pet. 10:41) and the answer that *was heard* (ἠκούετο) from the cross (Gos. Pet. 10:42). The author emphasizes that the neutral Roman soldiers and the hostile Jewish leaders witness the

⁶³¹ Crossan 1988, 21.

⁶³² Henderson 2011, 169.

resurrection, and he underlines that they saw and heard everything by repeatedly using verbs of perception.⁶³³

4.5. Confession and conspiracy (Gos. Pet. 11:45–11:49)

11:45 Ταῦτα ἰδόντες οἱ περὶ τὸν κεντυρίωνα νυκτὸς ἔσπευσαν πρὸς Πειλᾶτον, ἀφέντες τὸν τάφον ὃν ἐφύλασσον, καὶ ἐξηγήσαντο πάντα ἅπερ εἶδον, ἀγωνιῶντες μεγάλως καὶ λέγοντες· Ἀληθῶς υἱὸς ἦν Θεοῦ. 11:46 Ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πειλᾶτος ἔφη· Ἐγὼ καθαρεύω τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὑμῖν δὲ τοῦτο ἔδοξεν. 11:47 Εἴτα προσελθόντες πάντες ἐδέοντο αὐτοῦ καὶ παρεκάλουν κελεῦσαι τῷ κεντυρίωνι καὶ τοῖς στρατιώταις μηδενὶ εἰπεῖν ᾧ εἶδον. 11:48 Συμφέρει γάρ, φασίν, ἡμῖν ὀφλῆσαι μεγίστην ἁμαρτίαν ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ μὴ ἔμπεσεῖν εἰς χεῖρας τοῦ λαοῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ λιθασθῆναι. 11:49 Ἐκέλευσεν οὖν ὁ Πειλᾶτος τῷ κεντυρίωνι καὶ τοῖς στρατιώταις μηδὲν εἰπεῖν.

11:45 Having seen these things, those who were in the centurion's company at night hastened to Pilate, abandoning the tomb they were guarding and told everything they had seen, greatly agonized they said: truly this was the Son of God. 11:46 Pilate replied and said: I am clean of the blood of the Son of God, upon this you have decided. 11:47 Then everyone came to him asking and pleading to order the centurion and the soldiers to tell no one what they had seen. 11:48 Because it is better for us, they said, to commit the greatest sin before God than fall into the hands of the Jewish people and be stoned. 11:49 Pilate commanded the centurion and the soldiers to say nothing.

The resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter concludes with the reactions of the witnesses. In the third act of the narrative, the centurion's company returns to Pilate to report what they have seen and confess Jesus to be the Son of God (Gos. Pet. 11:45). Pilate responds to their testimony by stating that he is innocent of the blood of the Son of God and emphasizes that it is the Jewish leaders who have decided to have Jesus put to death (Gos. Pet. 11:46). The Jewish leaders request Pilate to command the centurion and the soldiers not to tell anyone what they have seen, because they regard it as better to commit the greatest sin before God than fall into the hands of the Jewish people (Gos. Pet. 11:47–11:48). The guard at the tomb narrative ends with a conspiracy. Pilate accepts their request and commands the soldiers to remain silent (Gos. Pet. 11:49).

⁶³³ Schaeffer 1995, 503–504; Henderson 2011, 168–170 presents a similar argument.

In Matthew the third act of the guard at the tomb narrative describes a conspiracy to suppress knowledge of the events at the tomb. Some of the soldiers return to the city and report to the high priests what has happened. The chief priests gather together with the elders and decide to bribe the guards with a large sum of money to say that the disciples stole the body while they were sleeping. The Jewish leaders promise to protect the guards if news of this reaches Pilate. The guards receive the money and do as they are told. Matthew concludes the narrative with a comment that this story has been told among the Jews up to the present day (Matt. 28:11–15).

The verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter 11:45–11:49 and Matthew 28:11–15 are virtually non-existent. However, in Mark 15:39 and Matthew 27:54 almost an identical confession of the centurion (and the soldiers) is placed at the foot of the cross. In Matthew Pilate's declaration of innocence is presented together with the ritual hand washing at the end of the trial (Matt. 27:24). The differences in the outline of the parallel narratives are to a great extent a result of the above-discussed differences in the preceding narrative. In Matthew it is somewhat ambiguous whether the guards are Romans or Jews. Moreover, the guards fall like dead men and it is unclear whether they witness the angel's message to the women. In the Gospel of Peter the guards are explicitly Roman soldiers and they have witnessed the resurrection at first hand. Therefore, it is natural that in the Gospel of Peter the soldiers report to Pilate and in Matthew the guards report to the high priests. The subsequent differences follow from the preceding differences of the narratives.⁶³⁴ The relocation of the Roman confessions is the other notable factor, which explains the differences between the Gospel of Peter and Matthew.

The soldiers' confession

In the Gospel of Peter those who accompanied the centurion (οἱ περὶ τὸν κεντυρίωνα) report to Pilate about everything they witnessed (Gos. Pet. 11:45).

⁶³⁴ Crossan 1988, 397–403 argued that the changes in the arrival (Gos. Pet. 8:29–9:34) and vision (Gos. Pet. 9:35–10:42) resulted in the differences in report (Gos. Pet. 11:45–11:49). Crossan, of course, argues that Matthew was dependent on the *Cross Gospel*.

It is not entirely clear who are included in οἱ περὶ τὸν κεντυρίωνα. Dewey argues that the expression refers only to the soldiers and the centurion. The Roman soldiers confess Jesus to be the Son of God. The return of the Jewish leaders who were at the tomb is described a few verses later (εἶτα προσελθόντες πάντες). This created an inconsistency in the narrative. In his response to the soldiers report Pilate reprimands the Jewish leaders (Gos. Pet. 11:46), although they have not yet arrived (Gos. Pet. 11.47).⁶³⁵ Crossan argues that those who were of the centurion's company and confessed Jesus as the Son of God included the Jewish authorities along with the centurion and the soldiers. Pilate reprimands the Jewish authorities and they in turn request him to silence the soldiers.⁶³⁶ Crossan's interpretation solves the above-mentioned inconsistency in the narrative. However, it creates another inconsistency. Pilate responds that you have decided on such a thing, namely the death of Jesus. This response is directed towards those who have reported the resurrection to Pilate, including the soldiers. These soldiers obviously have not decided on the crucifixion. Therefore, both interpretations leave an inconsistency in the narrative. Another inaccuracy in the narrative is present in the request of the elders. Literarily everyone (πάντες) who approaches Pilate would include everyone present at the tomb, but narrative logic dictates that it can refer only to the elders, because Pilate is asked to command the centurion and the soldiers to remain silent.

The inconsistencies in the narrative indicate that the author of the Gospel of Peter combined traditions that did not originally belong together. If the Roman confessions are excluded, the narrative logic runs smoothly. The soldiers report the resurrection to Pilate and the Jewish leaders request him to silence the soldiers. Pilate's confession creates the above-mentioned problems in the narrative. The conspiracy and the confessions were, therefore, most likely combined by the author of the Gospel of Peter. This interpretation is supported by the presence of these elements in different locations in Matthew. The author's inability to combine these elements into a consistent narrative is supported by the several inconsistencies in the relatively short fragment of the Gospel of Peter. In the light of this evidence, it seems likely that the author of

⁶³⁵ Dewey 1990, 115; See Head 1992, 211.

⁶³⁶ Crossan 1988, 396.

the Gospel of Peter intended that the soldiers and the centurion confessed Jesus to be the Son of God. In the following, I will argue in closer detail that the author of the Gospel of Peter placed the confession of the soldiers at the foot of the cross (Mk 15:39 par. Mt 27:54) and Pilate's confession at the trial (Mt 27:24) in the final act of the guard at the tomb narrative.

The Gospel of Peter shares with Mark and Matthew the centurion's confessions of Jesus as the Son of God. There seems to be Christological development in the Roman confession. Mark has the phrase "this man" (οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος) and Matthew shortened the phrase to a pronoun οὗτος. The Gospel of Peter omits the pronoun, but otherwise the confessions disagree only in the word order:

Mark 15:39	Ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν
Matthew 27:54	Ἀληθῶς θεοῦ υἱὸς ἦν οὗτος
Gospel of Peter 11:45	Ἀληθῶς υἱὸς ἦν θεοῦ

The confessions are strikingly similar, but otherwise the evangelists have handled the material differently. Mark and Matthew placed the confession at the foot of the cross (Mark 15:39, Matt. 27:54). In Mark the confession follows immediately after the death of Jesus. The centurion, after seeing how Jesus died, confesses that this man truly was the Son of God. Matthew added an earthquake and the resurrection of the holy ones after Jesus's death. These miraculous events cause fear in the centurion and those who were guarding Jesus with him and lead to their confession that Jesus was the Son of God. The author of the Gospel of Peter placed the confession of the centurion's company's to the soldiers' report of the resurrection to Pilate. The gospels also disagree about who made the confession of Jesus as the Son of God. In the Gospel Peter those around the centurion make the confession. These differences raise the question which is the more original setting of the same confession and who presented it in the earliest tradition?

Koester has argued that the Gospel of Peter contains the earliest tradition of the confession of the Roman soldiers. According to Koester, Mark relocated the reaction of the witnesses of an early epiphany narrative to the scene of Jesus's death. Mark's narrative betrays signs of the secondary

placement of the confession at the foot of the cross. Koester claims that in the Markan context this confession is not justified, because the preceding events do not warrant such a magnificent confession. Furthermore, the centurion, who has not been mentioned earlier in the narrative, appears abruptly in this scene, which indicates that the confession has been clumsily relocated into its current location in Mark.⁶³⁷ Crossan argues for a similar relocation of the confession. According to Crossan Mark relocated the centurion's confession because the theological vision of the risen and victorious Jesus contradicted his theology of the cross and suffering. According to Mark's theology, the proper place to confess Jesus as the Son of God is at the foot of the cross.⁶³⁸ Crossan also argues that the unmotivated confession receives support from the way Matthew and Luke have handled their source. In Mark the centurion confesses after seeing Jesus die (ιδὼν παρεστηκὸς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ), but Matthew connected the confession to the signs (ιδόντες τὸν σεισμὸν καὶ τὰ γινόμενα) after Jesus' death. In Luke the centurion notes what had occurred and confesses Jesus' innocence. The redaction of both Matthew and Luke points to a deficiency in Mark's account.⁶³⁹

Kirk has criticized Koester for unrealistic assumptions about the consistency of Mark's narrative. The dramatic death of Jesus is accompanied by a supernatural darkness that covers the whole earth. The confession of the

⁶³⁷ Koester 1990, 234. Koester also argues that Matthew realized the problem in the narrative and inserted a description of various miracles between the death of Jesus and the confession of the soldiers (Matt. 27:51b–53).

⁶³⁸ Crossan 1988, 347–349; See Crossan 1985, 141. Crossan also argued that Matthew conflated the *Cross Gospel* and Mark in the confession of the centurion and the soldiers. In the Gospel of Peter the confession is made by the centurion and the soldiers after the resurrection. In Mark the centurion alone confesses Jesus as the Son of God at the foot of the cross. Crossan claims that this demonstrates Matthew's conflation of the Markan placement of the confession and the *Cross Gospel's* plural number of confessors. (Crossan 1988, 348–349; Cf. Crossan 1985, 140–141). The fact that Matthew adds the soldiers to the confession scene does not require a source. Matthew has made a similar redactional change to other Markan scenes as well. In the narratives of the demoniac of Gadara (Mark 5:1–20) and the blind man in Jericho (Mark 10:46–52) Mark has only one character, but in the parallel scenes in Matthew there are two characters in each narrative (Matt. 8:28–34 and 20:29–34). Therefore, Matthew's change of the centurion to the centurion and a group of soldiers can be explained as a typical redactional feature of Matthew and it is not necessary to presuppose conflation of two sources. (Brown 1987, 329). Matthew also had a tendency to place Jewish leaders in groups of two (Luz 1989, 70). Another difficulty in Crossan's argument is Mark's version of the confession. Crossan claimed that Mark wanted to focus on the centurion. (Crossan 1988, 348–349). Crossan did not offer a reason for the redactional change to only a single character. The development of the tradition can be explained through the priority of the canonical gospels. The confession of the centurion at the foot of the cross is the earliest version of the tradition. Matthew added the soldiers into the scene in order to have several characters confess Jesus as the Son of God. The author of the Gospel of Peter relocated this confession of the centurion and the soldiers to resurrection scene, because his theology, polemic description of the Jews and above all narrative consistency required a change to the narrative outline of the canonical gospels (see below).

⁶³⁹ Crossan 1985, 141

centurion is a credible reaction to such an event. The centurion appears rather abruptly in this scene, but the soldiers and the whole company of soldiers are mentioned at the beginning of the abuse (Mark 15:16). It is Roman soldiers who mock, abuse and crucify Jesus. The sudden reference to a centurion in the presence of the soldiers is not too unexpected so as to demonstrate awkward secondary placement of the confession. It cannot be used to uncover a seam in Mark's narrative.⁶⁴⁰ In addition to Kirk's criticism, the reasoning from Matthew's and Luke's redaction can be reversed in arguing against the too sudden appearance of the centurion. Neither Matthew nor Luke regarded the appearance of the centurion as too sudden, because they did not rectify Mark's narrative by preparing the reader for his appearance at the cross. The centurion's sudden appearance is at worst clumsy writing. It does not constitute an argument that can carry the weight required to separate the confession as secondary replacement from its Markan context. Moreover, Koester's claim of an unmotivated confession seems less convincing in light of Crossan's argument that Mark's Christology is focused on the suffering and dying Son of God. If Mark's theology is heavily focused on the cross, the centurion's confession appears in a proper context. According to Crossan, it "agrees completely with Markan Christology".⁶⁴¹ This demonstrates that at least Mark himself regarded the confession as properly motivated. Therefore, it cannot be regarded as a misplaced fragment, but as a well-integrated part of Mark's theology.

It can also be argued that the author of the Gospel of Peter placed the confession of the centurion and the soldiers within the resurrection narrative. Brown emphasizes that the author of the Gospel of Peter has a tendency to focus on miraculous events. The confession of the soldiers after the miraculous resurrection is in line with the author's theology of the victorious Lord. Therefore, the relocation of the confession from the foot of the cross to the resurrection narrative can be interpreted as the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter.⁶⁴² The theology of the author of the Gospel of Peter explains the placing of the soldiers' confession within the resurrection

⁶⁴⁰ Kirk 1994, 586.

⁶⁴¹ Crossan 1985, 141.

⁶⁴² Brown 1987, 329, 331.

narrative. Moreover, a crucial motive for the relocation of the confession from the foot of the cross to the post-resurrection scene in the Gospel of Peter can be seen in the narrative logic of the Gospel of Peter. Neiryck has emphasized that in the Gospel of Peter the Jewish people crucify Jesus. The Roman soldiers are not mentioned until Pilate makes them available to the Jewish leaders to guard the tomb of Jesus. The author of the Gospel of Peter wanted to preserve the centurion's confession, but the narrative logic dictated that he had to remove the confession of the soldiers from its Markan and Matthean context. The resurrection narrative is the only section of the Gospel of Peter where the Roman soldiers are involved and their confession could be placed only after the resurrection. The author of the Gospel of Peter replaced the confession with the soldiers' report of the resurrection to Pilate.⁶⁴³

Pilate's confession

Pilate responds to the report of the soldiers by emphasizing his innocence and holding the Jewish leaders responsible for the death of Jesus (Gos. Pet. 11:46). In Matthew, Pilate claims his innocence at the end of the trial, whereas the author of the Gospel of Peter has enhanced the confession of Pilate. Henderson notes that in Matthew 27:24 Pilate declares himself innocent of the blood of this man. In the Gospel of Peter, however, Pilate declares that he is innocent of the blood of the Son of God.⁶⁴⁴ In the Gospel of Peter Pilate's confession of innocence is also an indirect confession of Jesus as the Son of God. Pilate's Christological confession in the Gospel of Peter seems to reflect a development of the tradition.⁶⁴⁵ The immediate context provides an explanation of the author's redaction. Henderson has argued that the author of the Gospel of Peter placed the soldiers' confession of Jesus as the Son of God and Pilate's declaration of innocence within the resurrection narrative.⁶⁴⁶ The combination of these originally independent confessions in the guard at the tomb narrative led to their harmonization. The soldiers' confession influenced Pilate's declaration of innocence. The author of the Gospel of Peter

⁶⁴³ Neiryck 1989, 155; See also Henderson 2011, 163.

⁶⁴⁴ Henderson 2011, 76.

⁶⁴⁵ Foster 2010, 447.

⁶⁴⁶ See Henderson 2011, 163.

appropriated the title Son of God from the soldiers' confession in to Pilate's declaration of innocence. This explains Pilate's higher Christological confession in the Gospel of Peter. The soldiers confess Jesus as the Son of God and Pilate responds to their confession by using the same venerable language.

In the Gospel of Peter Pilate proclaims that he is innocent of the blood of the Son of God and rebukes the Jewish leaders. In Matthew Pilate hands over the responsibility to the Jews. In Matthew this is a reference to the imminent crucifixion, but in the new context in the Gospel of Peter it looks back to the trial. In terms of its content, the statement emphasizes the guilt of the Jewish leaders.⁶⁴⁷ This is another instance where there may be a combination of different sources. In the Gospel of Peter Herod condemns Jesus to be crucified, but in the guard at the tomb narrative Pilate reproaches the Jewish leaders. In terms of narrative consistency, Pilate should have directed this reproach at Herod. However, only a short fragment of the trial is preserved and it is possible that the elders, scribes and Pharisees were described as being responsible for the death of Jesus in the non-extant narrative.

Conspiracy

After the confessions of the Roman soldiers and Pilate (Gos. Pet. 11:45–11:46), the Jewish leaders return from the tomb. Their response is markedly different from the confession of the Romans. The Jewish leaders beseech Pilate to command the centurion and the soldiers to say nothing of what they have seen. They say that it is better for them to commit the greatest sin before God rather than fall at the hands of the people. Pilate accepts their request and orders the centurion and the soldiers to say nothing (Gos. Pet. 11:47–11:49).

The Gospel of Peter provides a motive for the request of the Jewish leaders. They fear that they will fall into the hands of the Jewish people and be stoned (Gos. Pet. 11:48). The request to suppress knowledge of the resurrection is similar to the request to place a guard at the tomb. The Jewish leaders fear that the people will believe in the resurrection of Jesus and do

⁶⁴⁷ Vaganay 1930, 311.

them harm (Gos. Pet. 8:30).⁶⁴⁸ These characterizations are not found in Matthew's version of the guard at the tomb. Matthew's redaction of Mark demonstrates a tendency to increase the anti-Jewish polemic and it is unlikely that he would have omitted these descriptions of the selfish motives of the Jewish elders. The author of the Gospel of Peter demonstrates an even more pronounced anti-Jewish tendency and the description of the elders' motives are in both instances likely to be his own additions.⁶⁴⁹

The author of the Gospel of Peter also adds a description of the request of the Jewish leaders. They say that it is better for them to commit the greatest sin before God than to fall into the hands of the Jews. This description of their behaviour in the sight of God is not only unnecessary with regard to their request to Pilate, but also a completely implausible statement of their own values. The author's intention is not to present a credible motive for the actions of the elders. The purpose of the confession of the Jewish leaders is to characterize them as more concerned with their own wellbeing than following the will of God. Their confession of the greatest sin before God forms an anti-confession to the confession of Jesus as the Son of God by the Roman soldiers and Pilate. The confession of the Romans and the anti-confession of the Jews represented their responses to the resurrection.

The self-confession of the elders is characteristic of the way the author of the Gospel of Peter creates a negative image of the Jews. He did not only narrate that the Jewish leaders committed the greatest sin before God, but placed that statement on their own lips. There are two other notable examples of this same literary technique in the preserved fragment of the Gospel of Peter. At the end of the trial King Herod says to Pilate that the sun should not set upon a murdered man (Gos. Pet. 2:5).⁶⁵⁰ At the end of the passion narrative the Jews, elders and priests confess their sins and the forthcoming punishment (Gos. Pet. 7:25). These verses do not narrate what the author of the Gospel of Peter thought these characters would have said. Herod did not consider the crucifixion of Jesus as a murder and the Jews did not consider that their actions brought about the destruction of Jerusalem.

⁶⁴⁸ There is also a verbal agreement between verses 8:30 and 11:47.

⁶⁴⁹ The phrase do harm appears also in verse 4:13. It is likely that it is creation of the author of the Gospel of Peter as well.

⁶⁵⁰ Foster 2010, 245.

These are the author's own accusations that he placed in the mouth of those who he considered responsible for the death of Jesus, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the committing of the greatest sin before God. The author of the Gospel of Peter placed these confessions of guilt at the end of each section of the extant narrative. The anti-Jewish content of the confession of the greatest sin before God and the similar literary technique in verses 2:5 and 7:25 offers evidence that the author of the Gospel of Peter created this anti-confession as a negative characterization of the Jewish leaders.

Pilate's consent to the request of the Jewish leaders ends the resurrection narrative. He orders the centurion and the soldiers to remain silent about what they have seen (Gos. Pet. 11:49). The conspiracy solves several issues concerning the narrative. It explains why the resurrection does not become widely acknowledged, although Roman soldiers have witnessed it. The reliable and neutral witnesses, who confessed Jesus as the Son of God, are forced to remain silent. The underlying reasons are the selfish and corrupt motives of the Jewish leaders. Conspiracy is yet another way to describe the Jewish leaders in dark colours. Only their ultimate sin prevents the truth of the resurrection from becoming known.

The conspiracy, however, leads to an inconsistency in narrative logic. Why does Pilate comply with the request of the Jewish elders? He has, after all, just confessed Jesus to be the Son of God. Pilate has also reaffirmed that he is innocent of the death of Jesus and emphasized the responsibility of the Jewish leaders (Gos. Pet. 11:46). This repeats the stance he held at the trial (Gos. Pet. 1:1–2). Pilate is characterized as being favourable towards Jesus and critical towards the Jewish leaders. He nevertheless suddenly aligns himself with the Jewish leaders and against Jesus. It is noteworthy that Pilate's motive for participating in the conspiracy is not explained. This is in stark contrast with the author's manner of providing the motives of the Jewish leaders (Gos. Pet. 8:30; 11:48). It seems that the author of the Gospel of Peter did not have an explanation for the inconsistent behaviour of Pilate.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁵¹ Pilate's action can't be explained through his subordinate position which he held in the trial. In the guard at the tomb narrative he has the supreme authority. The Jewish leaders have to ask him to provide a guard at the tomb (Gos. Pet. 8:30) and to command the soldiers to say nothing of what they have seen (Gos. Pet. 11:47).

The unexpected change in the narrative can be explained as an attempt of the author of the Gospel of Peter to combine contradictory motives. He wanted the Roman prefect to confess his innocence of the death of Jesus. He also wanted to have the Roman soldiers witness the resurrection and retain their magnificent confession. Yet Pilate and the soldiers under his command have to participate in the conspiracy. The combination of the exoneration of the Romans and the participation of Roman witnesses in a successful conspiracy cannot be combined without tension in the narrative.

It is unlikely that Pilate's confession originally belonged to the guard at the tomb narrative. The soldiers report to Pilate what they have seen and the elders ask him to order the soldiers to remain silent. Pilate fulfils their request. The conspiracy to conceal the resurrection (Gos. Pet. 11:45a-c, 11:47–11:49) forms a smoothly flowing narrative. The inconsistencies and interruptions in the narrative resulted from the author of the Gospel of Peter placing Pilate's confession into the present context from the original context in the trial. The confession of the soldiers is not problematic for the narrative flow and consistency. However, it was argued above that the author of the Gospel of Peter placed the confession within the guard at the tomb narrative, because he had removed the Roman soldiers from the passion narrative. The confession of the soldiers probably led the author to place Pilate's confession into the present context. The combination of originally separate traditions is supported by the fact that they are placed in a different context in Matthew. Again, the author of the Gospel of Peter succeeded in presenting an apologetic and polemical narrative, but failed to uphold narrative consistency.

The participation of Pilate and the soldiers in the conspiracy also creates an inconsistency in the narrative. In the preceding narrative the author has carefully constructed favourable a portrait of Pilate, but now the prefect participates in the nefarious actions of the Jewish leaders (Gos. Pet. 11:47-11:49). Pilate's change of heart happens without any apparent reason immediately after he has confessed his innocence for the death of the Son of God (Gos. Pet. 11:46). The same applies, to a lesser extent, to the Roman soldiers as well. The author of the Gospel of Peter completely removed them from the passion narrative. At the tomb they witness the resurrection and

confess Jesus to be the Son of God in front of Pilate (Gos. Pet 11:45). This has significance for the question of the apocryphon's anti-Judaism. The Gospel of Peter has been widely regarded as an anti-Jewish and pro-Roman text. These features are inseparably connected to each other. If the responsibility of the Jews increases, the responsibility of the Romans decreases. Although pro-Roman or anti-Jewish motives produce a similar outcome, it can be argued that the author of the Gospel of Peter's primary intention was to blame the Jews rather than to exonerate the Romans from the responsibility for the death of Jesus. His stance on the question of pro-Roman and anti-Jewish sentiments is expressed above else in the conspiracy to conceal the resurrection. The author of the Gospel of Peter abandons his positive description of the Romans and preserves the apologetic and polemical against the Jews. There is no comparable positive exception to the negative image of the Jews in the extant fragment.⁶⁵² Therefore, it seems more likely that the author of the Gospel of Peter was more concerned in the negative description of the Jews than in the positive description of the Romans.

4.6. Conclusion

The resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter is dependent on Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative. The proponents of the priority of the Gospel of Peter have argued that the Gospel of Peter preserves the form of an early epiphany narrative. In the Gospel of Peter the resurrection narrative preserves a consecutive form of the narrative, while in Matthew the empty tomb narrative of Mark has been placed in the middle of the guard at the tomb narrative. When Matthew and the Gospel of Peter are compared, the latter seems to preserve the earlier form of the narrative. The proponent of the priority of the Gospel of Peter argue that the removal of the secondary apologetic elaborations leaves an epiphany narrative, which is earlier than Matthew. However, if the Gospel of Peter is compared to both Matthew and Mark, the placement of the empty tomb narrative is not as straightforward an

⁶⁵² For a discussion of the lamentation of the people, priests and elders (Gos. Pet. 7:25), see chapter 5.5.

indication of the form and priority of the narrative as the proponents of the Gospel of Peter's priority claim. The author of the Gospel of Peter had to choose whether to narrate the women's visit to the tomb in the middle of the guard at the tomb narrative or to narrate it separately. Moreover, the author of the Gospel of Peter also knew an escorted resurrection tradition of the ascension of Jesus from the tomb to heaven with angels. The author used this tradition as the centrepiece of his resurrection narrative. The author of the Gospel of Peter created a narrative where hostile and neutral witnesses witness the resurrection, while the role of women as prominent witnesses to the resurrection is diminished. Both aspects served the author's apology for the resurrection and explain why he preferred to place the escorted resurrection tradition in the guard at the tomb narrative, which he received from Matthew, and to place the empty tomb narrative after the resurrection narrative.

The first scene of the resurrection narrative of the Gospel of Peter demonstrates a literary dependence on Matthew. The extensive verbal agreement between the Gospel of Peter 8:30 and Matthew 27:64 preserves evidence that can be convincingly explained only through literary dependence. The minor verbal agreements and elements of Matthew's redaction in the Gospel of Peter 8:28–8:34 support this conclusion. The author of the Gospel of Peter has rewritten the significant section of the opening scene. The Jewish leaders are depicted in a more negative light as selfish cowards who are only interested in their own wellbeing. The content and vocabulary of this description is similar to other sections of the Gospel of Peter, which indicates that the author of the Gospel of Peter created this description. The redaction of the author is characterized by an apologetic tendency. The tomb is sealed with seven seals and guarded by Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers, who pitch a tent and guard in turns. The author of the Gospel of Peter emphasizes that opponents closed the tomb and they made every effort to secure it. However, the author's apology created a problem for the narrative logic. He emphasized the honourable burial of the Lord, but after the burial Joseph inexplicably leaves the tomb open. The apology of the resurrection narrative is in tension with the burial narrative.

The apologetic emphasis of the author of the Gospel of Peter continues in the resurrection scene. The resurrection of Jesus is described in detail and the resurrection is witnessed by Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders. The soldiers, who are guarding the tomb in turns, see the heavens open and the descent of the angels. They wake up others and everybody at the tomb witnesses the resurrection at first hand. The escorted resurrection tradition formed the kernel of resurrection scene, which the author of the Gospel of Peter elaborated with the apologetic redaction. The descent of another angel is a completely separate element in the resurrection narrative and it is only a preparation for the empty tomb narrative.

The third scene of the resurrection narrative describes the reaction of the witnesses and the conspiracy to suppress knowledge of the resurrection. The author of the Gospel of Peter placed the confession of the centurion and the Roman soldiers from the foot of the cross to the resurrection narrative. The author had written the Roman soldiers out of the passion narrative, but he wanted to preserve their confession of Jesus as the Son of God. The only logical place to include the confession in his narrative was the resurrection narrative. Pilate responds to the soldiers' confession by emphasizing his innocence and confessing Jesus as the Son of God. The confession of the soldiers seems to have influenced the author's description of Pilate's confession. The author of the Gospel of Peter emphasizes the guilt of the Jews by having Pilate rebuke them for their decision to crucify the Lord. Nevertheless, Pilate accepts the request of the Jewish leaders to suppress knowledge of the resurrection. Pilate's participation is an important piece of evidence in the examination of the author's description of the Romans. The author of the Gospel of Peter includes Pilate in the conspiracy. This indicates that the author's primary motive was not to compose a narrative that was favourable to the Romans. The examination of the trial in the following chapter will further support this conclusion.

5. The passion narrative

5.1. Introduction

The passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter has been a focal point for scholars who have argued that the apocryphon preserves earlier traditions than the canonical gospels. Their argument for the priority of the passion traditions of the Gospel of Peter is built upon the use of the Scriptures in the Gospel of Peter. Denker has demonstrated that the passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter is closely connected to the Old Testament. Virtually all the verses of the passion narrative reflect prophetic texts. However, the Gospel of Peter does not explicitly cite the prophetic texts of the Old Testament. Instead, the connection between the passion of Jesus and the passion prophecies is established through allusions to the prophetic texts.⁶⁵³ Koester's thesis is that the passion narrative was not formed from historical recollections, but from the reflection of passion prophecies. Koester argues that the Gospel of Peter preserves the earliest form of the use of Scriptures in the passion narrative, because the allusions to the prophetic texts are traditionhistorically the earliest form of the passion narrative. The explicit quotations of the Scriptures represent a later phase in the development of the passion narrative. Koester also argues that in the Gospel of Peter prophetic texts are utilized only in one scene, but in the canonical gospels these have been divided into several scenes. The Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels drew independently on this exegetical tradition, but the Gospel of Peter preserves a traditionhistorically earlier form of these traditions.⁶⁵⁴ Koester's analysis of the texts focuses on the handwashing (Gos. Pet. 1:1), the abuse of Jesus (Gos. Pet. 3:9), and the drink offered to Jesus (Gos. Pet. 5:16). He argues that these verses preserve the earliest form of the passion narrative.⁶⁵⁵

Crossan develops Koester's thesis concerning the formation of the passion narrative. According to Crossan, the followers of Jesus knew only that the Romans crucified him outside of Jerusalem during the Passover. The

⁶⁵³ Denker 1975, 58–77.

⁶⁵⁴ Koester 1980, 126–128.

⁶⁵⁵ Koester 1990, 220–230. See also Koester 1980, 127.

details of the passion narrative developed through the reflection on the prophetic texts.⁶⁵⁶ Crossan analyses the entire passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter and argues that it demonstrates the development of the passion narrative through the use of prophetic texts. The uniqueness of Crossan's thesis is that the authors of the canonical gospels used the passion narrative of the *Cross Gospel* (Gos. Pet. 1:1–1:2, 2:5–6:22, 7:25). Only the burial narrative (Gos. Pet. 2:3–2:4, 6:23–6:24) is a later insertion of the second-century author.⁶⁵⁷

Green criticizes Koester's thesis about the development of the passion narrative. He examines the use of prophetic texts in a single scene and in several different scenes. He argues that the use of prophetic texts in only one scene does not demonstrate its traditionhistorical priority. Therefore, it cannot be used as an argument for the priority of the Gospel of Peter.⁶⁵⁸

Brown criticizes Koester for an overly rigid approach to the development of the passion narrative and its historical value. He questions the claim that allusion to the Scriptures demonstrate the early form of the traditions. The use of allusions or quotation is not evidence of the relative date of the traditions, but of the style of the author. Brown exemplifies his position with an analysis of the drink offered to Jesus (Gos. Pet. 5:16).⁶⁵⁹

Schaeffer examines the abuse of Jesus (Gos. Pet. 3:9) and the drink offered to Jesus (Gos. Pet. 5:16). She argues that the development of these traditions cannot be explained only through the use of prophetic texts. Moreover, the analysed texts do not support the conclusion that the use of a single prophetic text in a single scene of the passion narrative demonstrates the priority of the passion traditions.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁶ Crossan 1988, 405.

⁶⁵⁷ Crossan 1988, 33–233. Koester 1990, 220 acknowledges the value of Crossan's detailed analysis of the relationship between the prophetic texts and the formation of the passion narrative. However, he is critical of Crossan's thesis of the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels.

⁶⁵⁸ Green 1987, 294–296.

⁶⁵⁹ Brown 1987, 326–327.

⁶⁶⁰ Schaeffer 1995, 12–33.

5.2. The trial

1:1 ... τῶν δὲ Ἰουδαίων οὐδεὶς ἐνίψατο τὰς χεῖρας, οὐδὲ Ἡρώδης οὐδὲ εἷς τῶν κριτῶν αὐτοῦ. Καὶ μὴ βουλευθέντων νίψασθαι ἀνέστη Πειλᾶτος· 1:2 καὶ τότε κελεύει Ἡρώδης ὁ βασιλεὺς παραπημφθῆναι τὸν Κύριον, εἰπὼν αὐτοῖς ὅτι ὅσα ἐκέλευσα ὑμῖν ποιῆσαι αὐτῷ ποιήσατε.

2:5b Καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν τῷ λαῷ πρὸ μιᾶς τῶν ἁζύμων, τῆς ἑορτῆς αὐτῶν.

1:1 ... but none of the Jews washed their hands, neither Herod nor any of his judges. And when they would not wash, Pilate rose up. 1:2 And then Herod the king commanded that the Lord should be marched off, saying to them, What I have commanded you to do to him, do it.

2:5b And he handed him over to the people on the day before the unleavened bread, their festival.

Only the last two verses of the trial of the Gospel of Peter are preserved in the Akhmîm fragment in which the narrative begins in the middle of the sentence. These two verses do not have exact parallels with the canonical gospels. In the canonical gospels Pilate passes the sentence, but in the Gospel of Peter the trial concludes completely differently. Pilate withdraws in protest and Herod commands Jesus to be crucified (Gos. Pet. 1:2) and hands him over to the Jewish people (Gos. Pet. 2:5). The Gospel of Peter and Matthew share the tradition of hand washing during the trial. In the Gospel of Peter the Jews refuse to wash their hands, but in Matthew Pilate washes his hands. It is probable that Pilate washed his hands in the non-extant section of the Gospel of Peter.⁶⁶¹ The hand washing tradition is closely connected to the declaration of innocence. In Matthew Pilate washes his hand and declares himself innocent in the trial. In the Gospel of Peter Pilate's declaration of innocence appears in the resurrection narrative. The hand washing and declaration of innocence are mentioned in several passages of the Old Testament. The proponents of the priority of the canonical gospels have argued that the hand washing is one of the redactional features of Matthew that the author of the Gospel of Peter used in his gospel. However, Crossan and Koester have argued that both gospels drew independently on an exegetical interpretation of the Scriptures.⁶⁶² In the canonical gospels the involvement of Herod in the trial of Jesus is mentioned only in Luke, but in the third gospel Herod does not find

⁶⁶¹ See below.

⁶⁶² Crossan 1988, 95–100; Koester 1990; 220–222.

Jesus guilty. In the Gospel of Peter, however, he commands Jesus to be crucified and hands him over to the Jewish people. This has been interpreted as a typical late and anti-Jewish tradition. Koester claims that the condemnation and crucifixion by Herod is one of the obviously secondary features of the Gospel of Peter.⁶⁶³ However, Crossan argues that the trial scene of the Gospel of Peter, including Herod's role in the trial, is part of the very early *Cross Gospel*.⁶⁶⁴ In the following I will examine the claims that the Gospel of Peter has preserved pre-canonical traditions of the trial and argue that the author of the Gospel of Peter combined the Matthew and Luke traditions and that he developed these traditions in a more anti-Jewish direction. I will also examine other early sources that attribute the guilt or even the crucifixion to the Jewish people, and the role of the Gospel of Peter in the formation of this accusation.

Hand washing

The Akhmîm fragment of the Gospel of Peter begins with the refusal of the Jews to wash their hands. A convincing case can be made that in the preceding narrative Pilate had washed his hands. The participle δὲ in the beginning of the fragment is probably adversative, forming a contrast with the actions of the Jews. This implies that earlier in the trial someone had washed his hands.⁶⁶⁵ In the same verse Pilate is mentioned without any introduction and thus he must have been involved in the proceedings described in the non-extant portion of the text.⁶⁶⁶ Moreover, there is a contrast between Pilate and the Jews. The trial ends when Pilate rose up (ἀνέστη Πειλάτος). His withdrawal can be seen as a protest against the decision taken by the Jews.⁶⁶⁷ In Matthew 27:24, Pilate washes his hands and declares himself innocent of the blood of Jesus.⁶⁶⁸ In the Gospel of Peter, Pilate's declaration of innocence and the confession of Jesus as the Son of God occur after the resurrection

⁶⁶³ Koester 1990, 217.

⁶⁶⁴ Crossan 1988, 16–17.

⁶⁶⁵ Foster 2010, 215; Henderson 2011, 56–57.

⁶⁶⁶ Foster 2010, 215.

⁶⁶⁷ Foster 2010, 224; Augustin 2014, 283. In Acts 26:30 ἀνέστη is used in a similar manner to indicate the ending of a judicial process. (Foster 2010, 224).

⁶⁶⁸ Koester 1990, 220; Foster 2010, 215; Henderson 2011, 75–76.

(Gos. Pet. 11:46).⁶⁶⁹ The declaration of innocence presupposes that Pilate reached a similar conclusion in the trial as well.⁶⁷⁰ When the cumulative evidence is taken into consideration, the most likely conclusion is that in the non-extant section of the Gospel of Peter Pilate washed his hands as a sign of his innocence over the death of Jesus in contrast to the Jews who did not wash their hands. This is in line with the author's tendency to exonerate Pilate and to place the blame for the death of Jesus on the Jews.⁶⁷¹

Proponents and opponents of the Gospel of Peter's priority over the canonical gospels share the interpretation that Pilate washed his hands in the narrative section, which has not been preserved.⁶⁷² Scholars disagree on what this passage tells of the tradition history behind the Gospel of Peter. Crossan and Koester refer to the scriptural background of the tradition and argue against the Gospel of Peter's dependence on Matthew 27:24–25. Their analysis of the scriptural background of the hand-washing episode overlap to such an extent that it is reasonable to present them together.⁶⁷³ They disagree, however, on what this analysis tells us about the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and Matthew. Crossan considers that the latter is dependent on the former, while Koester argues that both authors drew on the same exegetical tradition independently of each other.⁶⁷⁴ Their arguments will be discussed individually after the discussion of the scriptural background behind both gospels.

The scriptural background of the hand-washing tradition is apparent. Deuteronomy 21:1–9 describes a cultic ritual that includes the washing of hands and an oath of declaring oneself innocent. The passage describes a situation where a man is found murdered and the crime remains unresolved. Guilt over innocent blood is purged from the people of Israel by performing the following ritual. Elders of the nearest town must take a heifer to a place with running water and break its neck. In the presence of a priest,

⁶⁶⁹ See above chapter 4.4.

⁶⁷⁰ Henderson 2011, 75–76.

⁶⁷¹ Foster 2010, 215–216, 223–226.

⁶⁷² Green 1987, 298–299; Crossan 1988, 98; Koester 1990, 220; Nickals 2000, 230. Verheyden 2002, 458; Mara 2003, 35; Hartenstein 2007, 174–175; Omerzu 2007, 333; Foster 2010, 216; Foster 2010b, 52–53; Henderson 2011, 57; Augustin 2014, 13, 156.

⁶⁷³ Crossan 1988, 96–100; Koester 1990, 220–222 who explicitly refers to the analysis of Crossan.

⁶⁷⁴ Crossan 1988, 100; Koester 1990, 222.

the elders must wash their hands (νίπονται τὰς χεῖρας) above the heifer and declare their innocence of the blood (τὸ αἷμα τοῦτο).

Several Psalms allude to the hand-washing ritual. Psalm 25:5–6 is particularly important for our discussion: “I wash my hands in innocence (νίψομαι ἐν ἀθώοις τὰς χεῖράς μου), and go about thy altar.” Psalm 72:13 also alludes to Deuteronomy 21:1–9: “All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence (ἐννύαμην ἐν ἀθώοις τὰς χεῖράς μου).” A third text that needs to be quoted is Daniel 13:46 or Susanna 46. In the narrative Susanna is falsely condemned to death and as she is being led away, Daniel is inspired by the Holy Spirit to cry out “I am innocent of the blood” (Καθαρὸς ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος ταύτης). These texts form the intertextual background for analysis of the hand-washing tradition in Matthew and the Gospel of Peter.⁶⁷⁵

Pilate’s washing of hands (ἀπενίψατο τὰς χεῖρας) in Matthew 27:24 alludes to these Old Testament texts. Matthew’s wording of declaration “I am innocent of this man’s blood (Ἀθῶός εἰμι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τούτου) has the closest parallel in Psalm 26:5–6. The infamous declaration of the people, “His blood be on us and on our children” (Matt. 27:25), is a mockery of the prayer to remove the guilt from the people in Deuteronomy 21:8. In the Gospel of Peter Pilate’s declaration of innocence is placed in the resurrection narrative (Gos. Pet. 11:46) and the wording “I am clean from the blood” (Ἐγὼ καθαρεύω τοῦ αἵματος) is closer to the wording of Daniel 13.46. In the extant fragment there is no actual description of Pilate washing his hands and a comparison between verbal agreements cannot be made. However, the refusal of the Jews to perform the hand washing (τῶν δὲ Ἰουδαίων οὐδεὶς ἐνίψατο τὰς χεῖρας), which is similar to the mockery of the declaration of innocence in Matthew 27:24, establishes a connection to Old Testament ritual.⁶⁷⁶

Koester argues that the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and Matthew in the tradition of Pilate washing his hands is not one of simple dependence. Koester’s argument against a dependence between the two gospels rests on the differences in the development of the same exegetical tradition in Matthew and the Gospel of Peter. The author of the Gospel of

⁶⁷⁵ Crossan 1998, 96–98; See also Koester 1990, 221; Hieke 2007, 93–94.

⁶⁷⁶ Crossan 1988, 98–99; Koester 1990, 221–222.

Peter used the hand-washing tradition to emphasize the guilt of Herod and his judges, who do not wash their hands and declare their innocence. In the Gospel of Peter the mockery of the prayer is not included. The different formulations of Pilate's declaration of innocence also demonstrate that both authors drew on the same scriptural tradition independently of each other. According to Koester, the Gospel of Peter is not dependent on Matthew, but both are witnesses to early Christian scribal activity that formed the details of the passion narrative.⁶⁷⁷

Let us first examine the two versions without discussing the relationship between them. There is one important difference in the description of Pilate in Matthew and the Gospel of Peter. Both gospels attempt to exonerate Pilate, but they disagree concerning the role played by the prefect. In Matthew, despite his very public gesture and declaration of innocence, Pilate nevertheless pronounces the sentence and hands Jesus over to the Roman soldiers for the crucifixion. Matthew describes Pilate as reluctantly condemning Jesus to be crucified. In the Gospel of Peter Pilate does not pronounce a sentence at all. After washing his hands, he leaves in protest and the Jewish king Herod passes the sentence.⁶⁷⁸ The allusions to the scriptural passages in the Gospel of Peter 1:1 and 11:46 are different from those found in Matthew 27:24–25, but at the same time both verses of the apocryphon show clear evidence of later developments in the tradition. The first one establishes the guilt of the Jews in the condemnation of Jesus. Pilate washes his hands, but Herod and his judges refuse to. As was mentioned above, Koester considers the tendency to exonerate Pilate and expand the guilt of the Jews were later developments in the tradition.⁶⁷⁹ There is also a significant Christological difference between the two versions. In Matthew, Pilate proclaims his innocence of the blood of this man (τούτου), but in the Gospel of Peter he refers to Jesus as the Son of God (υἱὸς θεοῦ). The higher Christological confession is probably an elaboration of the more original form

⁶⁷⁷ Koester 1990, 220–222.

⁶⁷⁸ Henderson 2011, 76.

⁶⁷⁹ Koester 1990, 217. Koester regards the whole scene before Pilate (Gos. Pet. 11:46–11:49) as an elaboration of the more original epiphany narrative. He attributes this apologetic motif the author of the Gospel of Peter (Koester 1990, 233).

of the tradition.⁶⁸⁰ After Pilate's declaration of innocence, he emphasizes that the Jews have decided on the judgement. This reiterates the later development of blaming the Jews.⁶⁸¹ Regardless of the relationship between Matthew and the Gospel of Peter, the latter preserves the exegetical tradition of hand washing and the confession of innocence concerning the death of Jesus in a form that is more developed and later than the one found in Matthew.

The question of the dependence between Matthew and the Gospel of Peter is more complicated than a simple comparison of the differences in the use of scriptural traditions. Koester's argument of the independent use of Old Testament traditions in Matthew and the Gospel of Peter presumes knowledge of the non-extant source material which is unfounded. We can presume from the extant material that Pilate washed his hands in the non-extant section of the Gospel of Peter, but beyond this general statement, we do not know how the Old Testament tradition was used in the trial of the Gospel of Peter. The mockery of the prayer is missing in the *extant* fragment of the Gospel of Peter. In addition, Pilate's hand washing and declaration of innocence in reminiscence of the Psalms belongs to the non-extant section of the Gospel of Peter. The author of the Gospel of Peter could have taken this tradition from Matthew 27:24, used it in the section of the trial that has not been preserved, and elaborated it according to his redactional tendency to emphasize the guilt of Herod and the Jews. Moreover, Pilate's declaration of innocence in terms reminiscent of Daniel 13:46 could be a further elaboration of the tradition in Matthew 27:24. Instead of repeating the allusion to Psalm 25:5–6 and 72:13 established in the trial, the author of the Gospel of Peter could have used another passage from the Scriptures in the later scene. The use of a related passage would have established a more elaborate connection to the prophetic texts. The differences between Matthew and the Gospel of Peter in the use of allusions to the Old Testament texts in the hand-washing scene could have developed from independent working with the same exegetical tradition or through the literary dependence of the Gospel of Peter on Matthew with further redactional elaborations to blame Herod and exonerate Pilate that guided the continuing use of the Scriptures. The

⁶⁸⁰ See above chapter 4.4.

⁶⁸¹ Henderson 2011, 76.

developed anti-Jewish and pro-Roman use of the tradition in the Gospel of Peter indicates that it is later than Matthew, but without the actual parallel of Pilate washing his hands and declaring his innocence in the trial of the Gospel of Peter, it is impossible to be certain whether the author of the Gospel of Peter drew on Matthew with this particular tradition. It seems best not to build the foundation of an argument on what may or may not have been present in the section of the Gospel of Peter that has not been preserved.

Crossan concludes that there is literary dependence between Matthew and the Gospel of Peter, but he argues Matthew 27:24 is dependent on the Gospel of Peter 1:1 and 11:46. In the Gospel of Peter the hand washing and declaration of innocence are separated, but Matthew combines them. Crossan notes that Pilate's declaration of innocence in the Gospel of Peter 11:46 is closer to Susanna 46 than either of the Psalms. Crossan regards verse 27:25 as a Matthean redaction that was formulated on the basis of a passage in 2 Kings 1:16 (Your blood be upon your head). The innocence of Pilate is combined with the guilt of the people for the blood of Jesus.⁶⁸²

The criticism presented against Koester's position applies to Crossan's proposal as well. The available evidence does not allow us to answer whether the guilt of the people was included in the Gospel of Peter or in Matthew's expansion of the tradition of Pilate's innocence. Crossan's hypothesis about the separation of the hand washing and the declaration of innocence presupposes an unlikely reconstruction of Pilate's behaviour in the non-extant section of the Gospel of Peter.⁶⁸³ It does not seem probable that Pilate only washed his hands as a sign of his innocence concerning the death of Jesus, but made no verbal declaration to explain his action. This is all the more likely when all the scriptural texts that mention hand washing also refer to a declaration of innocence.

The author of the Gospel of Peter presented Pilate's declaration of innocence as a reaction to the soldiers' report of the resurrection. This declaration reflects his behaviour in the trial and probably the confession of innocence with the hand washing. Susanna 46 was an appropriate scriptural

⁶⁸² Crossan 1988, 98–100.

⁶⁸³ The separation of hand washing and the declaration of innocence is shared by Henderson 2011, 75–76.

text to be used in a scene where Pilate repeats his innocence, but does not wash his hands. Susanna 46 does not include the washing of hands, but only the declaration of innocence. This applies to Pilate's confession after the resurrection in Gos. Pet. 11:46. The allusion to Susanna 46 also created another intertextual connection to the prophecies and avoided the repetition of the same expression. The Gospel of Peter 11:46 can be seen as an elaboration of Matthew 27:24 along with the influence of Susanna 46.

The authority of Herod and Pilate in the Gospel of Peter

Herod and Pilate are the two principal authority figures in the Gospel of Peter, but their roles are very different in the passion and resurrection narratives. In the trial Herod holds the principal authority and condemns Jesus to death. Pilate leaves in protest and presumably is unable to prevent the crucifixion (Gos. Pet. 1:1). Moreover, Pilate's subordinate position is apparent when he has to ask for Jesus's body from Herod (Gos. Pet. 2:4).⁶⁸⁴ Rather surprisingly, Herod is not mentioned again after the trial. In the guard at the tomb narrative, Pilate has the authority over the entire proceedings.⁶⁸⁵ Why does the Gospel of Peter describe Herod as being in charge of the trial and Pilate in charge of the tomb?

One possible solution is to search for an answer within the narrative logic of the gospel. In the trial Herod hands the body over to Pilate. Therefore, the body could technically be seen as Pilate's responsibility. Herod still holds the superior authority, as he does in the trial, but he is simply not involved in guarding the tomb. This explanation, however, does not coincide with the request to place the guard. Why are the scribes, the elders and the Pharisees worried about the murmuring of the people rather than Herod and the judges who passed the sentence? In the resurrection narrative Pilate places the blame for the crucifixion on the Jewish leaders. This indicates that the scribes, the elders and the Pharisees were among the Jews or judges who sentenced Jesus to death. However, the inconsistencies of the Gospel of Peter

⁶⁸⁴ Brown 1987, 338; Mara 2003, 40–41; Omerzu 2007, 334; Foster 2010, 239, 241; Henderson 2011, 58; Augustin 2014, 164.

⁶⁸⁵ Foster 2010, 246.

and the fragmentary nature of the evidence cast doubt on this conclusion. Even if the narrative were inconsistent in this regard, the question why the Jewish leaders go to Pilate who washed his hands and not to Herod who commanded the crucifixion would still be valid. Why the Jews do not continue to work together, but go to the Roman prefect instead? The difficulties in holding the narrative logic together indicate that the solution does not lie in that direction.

Another explanation is that the author of the Gospel of Peter wanted to include Pilate and the Roman soldiers in the guard at the tomb narrative. The probable motive for this was the desire to include them as neutral witnesses to the resurrection. If the Jewish leaders had approached Herod, the resurrection would have only been witnessed only by Jewish opponents. The Romans, however, do not remain neutral witnesses, because they have to participate in the cover up of the resurrection. The author of the Gospel of Peter is forced to break his favourable image of the Romans that he has carefully constructed throughout his gospel. Both the narrative logic and the author's pro-Roman narrative suffer from the inclusion of Pilate in the resurrection narrative. Therefore, it is unlikely that he created the involvement of Pilate in the guard at the tomb narrative.

A more plausible explanation for the inconsistent roles of Pilate and Herod in the Gospel of Peter is that in the trial the author used Luke as his source and Matthew in the guard at the tomb narrative. He placed the responsibility for the crucifixion on Herod, but the combination of the guard at the tomb narrative and the anti-Jewish redaction of the Lucan trial material resulted in an inconsistent narrative. The hypothesis of different canonical sources also explains the connection of Herod's involvement in the trial and Pilate's hand washing, which appear independently in the passion narrative of Luke and Matthew respectively.

Herod's title

The Gospel of Peter 1:2 describes Herod as a king (Ἡρώδης ὁ βασιλεὺς). In the extant fragment Herod is identified without any distinction from other

members of the Herodian family.⁶⁸⁶ Foster argues that the historical setting indicates that the author of the Gospel of Peter referred to Herod Antipas.⁶⁸⁷ Brown suggests that the second-century author may not have known that in reality Herod the Great was a king and Herod Antipas was a tetrarch of Galilee.⁶⁸⁸ This proposal seems unnecessary to explain Herod's title in the Gospel of Peter. In the Gospel of Peter, Herod has authority in Jerusalem over Pilate (Gos. Pet. 2:4). Foster notes that the use of the title king serves the narrative dynamics of Herod's superiority over Pilate.⁶⁸⁹ In the analysis of the resurrection narrative it became apparent that the author of the Gospel of Peter preferred to emphasize polemical description of the Jewish leaders rather than historical plausibility. Herod's role as a king is in accordance with the narrative logic and the author's polemical redaction. Foster also refers to the influence of the canonical gospels on Herod's title in the Gospel of Peter.⁶⁹⁰ In the canonical gospels Mark identifies Herod Antipas consistently as a king. Matthew was aware of Herod's proper title of tetrarch, but at times, he nevertheless referred to Herod Antipas as a king. Luke consistently attributed Herod Antipas the title of a tetrarch. The author of the Gospel of Peter could have taken Herod's title as a king from the several passages in Mark or Matthew.⁶⁹¹ A deliberate redaction of the canonical material offers a plausible explanation for the roles of Herod and Pilate in the trial. The purpose of the author of the Gospel of Peter was to blame the Jewish people and leaders for the death of Jesus. For this purpose, a Jewish king in Jerusalem suited him much better than a tetrarch of Galilee. The author of the Gospel of Peter could draw on Mark's or Matthew's description of Herod

⁶⁸⁶ The same applies to Herod's role in Luke 23:6–12, but there his governance of Galilee is given as his official role. This is an indication that Herod Antipas is intended (Foster 2010, 217–218, 226). Luke had identified him several times earlier in his gospel (Luke 3:1, 3:19, 9:7). It is possible that the author of the Gospel of Peter had provided more details of Herod's authority or family relations in the non-extant section of the trial or earlier in the gospel.

⁶⁸⁷ Foster 2010, 217.

⁶⁸⁸ Brown 1987, 337. The Gospel of Peter's description of Herod has often been interpreted as a sign of a late date for the gospel (Brown 1987, 338). The argument has some merit to it, but it should not be emphasized, especially when we have only a few verses of a fragmented text which describe Herod. The example of Herod Antipas demonstrates that Matthew and Luke were, at least in this regard, better informed of the historical details than Mark, but this does not make them earlier than Mark.

⁶⁸⁹ Foster 2010, 226.

⁶⁹⁰ Foster 2010, 226.

⁶⁹¹ If the author of the Gospel of Peter knew the canonical gospels, as I argue throughout this study, he could have learned the proper role of Herod Antipas and his relationship to Herod the Great from a number of places, eg. Matt. 2:19, 14:1ff., Luke 3:1. This hypothesis is supported by Pilate's role in the guard at the tomb narrative where he has the power to decide the course of action. This is difficult to explain if the author supposedly thought that Herod was the king in Jerusalem.

Antipas as a king, Luke's description of Herod as a ruler who had a possibility to condemn Jesus to death, and combine these with anti-Jewish redaction where Herod was a Jewish king who did condemn Jesus to death. Therefore, the description of Herod as the Jewish king who has the ultimate authority in Jerusalem may reflect more the author's own concerns than his lack of knowledge of historical realities or the content of the canonical gospels.

His judges

Those Jews who did not wish to wash their hands included Herod and his judges (τῶν δὲ Ἰουδαίων οὐδεὶς ἐνίψατο τὰς χεῖρας, οὐδὲ Ἡρώδης οὐδὲ εἷς τῶν κριτῶν αὐτοῦ). It is not clear to whom the genitive pronoun αὐτοῦ refers. Foster argues that it seems unlikely that Pilate's judges would have washed their hands while he did not. This would have also undermined the author's intention to exonerate the Romans. Therefore, the pronoun is either a possessive genitive that refers to Herod, who is mentioned immediately before the pronoun, or an objective genitive referring to Jesus, who is being judged. Foster argues that the pronoun refers to Herod's judicial officers, because Herod is the central character in the trial.⁶⁹² This argument could be presented in support of the other alternative: surely, Jesus is the central figure in the narrative. Herod nevertheless seems to be the most likely option, because he is mentioned in the same verse. The later narrative might offer some clues to the identity of the judges. In verse 7:25 the Jews, the elders and the priest lament the retribution for their sins. In verse 11:46 Pilate rebukes the elders, and possibly the scribes and the Pharisees for the decision to crucify Jesus. However, the Gospel of Peter is not a consistent narrative and these verses may or may not accurately reflect the content of the trial. The fragmentary evidence prevents us from reaching a firm conclusion about the two alternatives. However, the Jewish identity of the judges seems secure and the responsibility for the death of Jesus falls on the shoulders of a wider group of Jewish judges.

⁶⁹² Foster 2010, 220–221. Mara 2003, 36 argues that αὐτοῦ refers to the Lord.

Their feast of the Unleavened Bread

After Pilate leaves at the end of the trial Herod commands others to carry out his orders and hands Jesus over to the Jewish people. The exact content of the command is not spelled out, but it presumably included the mocking, abuse and crucifixion that followed the trial.⁶⁹³ The author of the Gospel of Peter added a chronological marker that this happened before the feast of the unleavened bread. The passion narrative in the Gospel of Peter seems to follow the Johannine chronology, where the crucifixion is carried out before the feast begins.⁶⁹⁴ The author's emphasis on the fact that the feast of the unleavened bread is their feast, i.e. the feast of the Jews, may reveal something about the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. This implies that it is not a feast of the Christians.⁶⁹⁵ The author seems to promote the separation of the Passover and Easter celebration. This aligns with the probable observance of the Lord's Day⁶⁹⁶ and the non-observance of the Sabbath in the author's community. The different holy day of the week has become a separating factor between Christians and Jews. Similarly, the most important annual festival of both communities is a separating rather than a unifying element between the Jews and Christians. The author's need to emphasize the issue may hint that it was not perfectly clear to all Christians at the time, but the evidence allows this to be a merely tentative suggestion.

The identity of the crucifiers

In the Gospel of Peter the identity of the crucifiers is explicitly stated only when Herod hands Jesus over to the people (Gos. Pet. 2:5). This happens before the first day of the unleavened bread, which the author of the Gospel of Peter calls their feast. This demonstrated that he had the Jewish people in mind. Throughout the subsequent passion narrative, the crucifiers are not explicitly identified (Gos. Pet. 3:6–6:22) before the burial scene when they are

⁶⁹³ Foster 2010, 228–229. Interestingly Foster included the attempt to suppress the story of the empty tomb in the commandment, although Herod is not mentioned in the guard at tomb narrative. In light of the discussion above, it seems unlikely that the commandment extended beyond the crucifixion.

⁶⁹⁴ Foster 2010, 249; Henderson 2011, 53; Augustin 2014, 168.

⁶⁹⁵ Augustin 2014, 168.

⁶⁹⁶ Brown 1987, 339.

identified as Jews for the second time (Gos. Pet. 6:23). However, in the middle of the passion narrative the crucifiers are concerned about the observance of Deuteronomy. This reassures us that we are not dealing with a piece of careless writing.⁶⁹⁷ The anti-Jewish redaction is also consistent throughout the Gospel of Peter. The author of the Gospel of Peter may have realized how far he had drifted from the existing tradition and wanted to avoid explicit references to the Jewish people in the passion narrative.

The origin of the tradition that the Jewish people crucified Jesus is immensely important for the study of the history of Christian anti-Judaism. The Gospel of Peter has an important place in the development of this tradition, but it had significant predecessors in the Christian tradition. In the canonical gospels Luke is closest to the Gospel of Peter in this regard.⁶⁹⁸ Fitzmyer has emphasized the role of the Jews in the crucifixion in Luke. At the end of the trial Pilate hands Jesus over to their will (Luke 23:25). This refers to the high priests, the rulers and the people who are the previously identified groups in the narrative (Luke 23:13). Luke implies that the crucifixion is carried out by these groups. Only in verse 23:36 is it mentioned that the soldiers mocked the crucified Jesus and offered him wine. In Luke, Pilate still makes the final decision about of the crucifixion and the soldiers are present at the cross, though the Jewish leaders and people do the actual crucifixion.⁶⁹⁹

Brown took a critical stance against Fitzmyer's position. He concedes that grammatically "they" in verse 23:26 refers to the chief priests and the rulers and the people in verse 23:13. This is, however, not what Luke deliberately intended to claim or how his audience would have understood the narrative. Brown argues that Luke carelessly edited his Markan source and unintentionally conveyed the impression that Jews physically crucified Jesus. In Mark 15:15–20 Pilate hands Jesus over to the soldiers who mock and abuse him before taking him to be crucified. In his passion narrative Luke omitted Mark's description of the mockery and abuse of Jesus by the Roman soldiers. After Pilate's sentence, Luke picked up Mark's narrative from verse 15:20b where it is also said that they took him away to have him crucified (καὶ

⁶⁹⁷ Henderson 2011, 59. See also Omerzu 2007, 337.

⁶⁹⁸ All canonical gospels show signs of downplaying Pilate's role, but only in Luke is there any indication that the Jewish people carried out the crucifixion.

⁶⁹⁹ Fitzmyer 1985, 1496; Foster 2010, 247–249.

ἐξάγουσιν αὐτὸν ἵνα σταυρώσουσιν αὐτόν). In Mark the preceding narrative makes it perfectly clear that they are Roman soldiers. Brown suggests that Luke did not notice how his omission of the mockery and abuse changed the antecedent from the Roman soldiers to the Jewish leaders and people.⁷⁰⁰

Brown refers to several other passages in Luke-Acts that offer support for his argument from various different perspectives. He demonstrates that Luke carelessly edited Mark's narrative of the Sanhedrin trial, the mockery of Jesus and Peter's denials. In Mark 14:53–72 Peter's denials follow the Sanhedrin trial and the mockery, but Luke has reversed the order of the narrative. After the cockcrow, Peter went out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:62). In verse 22:63 Luke writes that the men who were holding him mocked and abused him (οἱ ἄνδρες οἱ συνέχοντες αὐτὸν ἐνέπαιζον αὐτῷ δέροντες). The grammatical antecedent of the latter verse is Peter, but surely, it is Jesus who is abused.⁷⁰¹ The involvement of Roman soldiers in Luke's passion narrative also supports Brown's thesis. They are abruptly present at the cross and mock the crucified Jesus (Luke 23:36–38). The Roman governor's role in the trial and the characteristically Roman punishment of crucifixion also direct the interpretation of verse 23:26 towards Roman soldiers. In Luke 18:31–33 Jesus explicitly predicts that the Son of Man will suffer and die at hands of the Gentiles. The involvement of Pilate and the Gentiles is expressed in varying terms in Acts 4:25–28 and 13:27–29. Brown interpreted Luke 24:20, Acts 2:36 and 3:15 as denoting responsibility for the death of Jesus, but not the actual crucifixion.⁷⁰²

Brown also expresses doubt that Luke's audience would have understood verse 23:25 as a reference to the chief priests, the rulers, and the people. He emphasizes that all Christians knew that Jesus was crucified by Roman soldiers. The audience would have interpreted "they" in verse 23:26 in the light of their prior knowledge of Roman soldiers as the physical crucifiers of Jesus, not from an antecedent thirteen verses earlier. Brown went as far as to claim that the audience would have never thought of "they" as Jews.⁷⁰³

⁷⁰⁰ Brown 1994, 8, 858.

⁷⁰¹ Brown 1994, 858.

⁷⁰² Brown 1994, 586–589.

⁷⁰³ Brown 1994, 9–10, 857.

The ambiguous and contradictory evidence offers support for both interpretations. An important piece of evidence in connection with Luke's intention is his redaction of the scene where Simon of Cyrene carries the cross. In Mark there is no ambiguity that the Roman soldiers forced Simon to carry the cross and Mark uses a technical term ἀγγαρεύουσιν that was used of a privilege of the Roman soldiers. In Luke there is ambiguity whether the ones who force Simon to carry the cross are Romans or Jewish. Luke changed Mark's technical term ἀγγαρεύουσιν to a more general ἐπιλαβόμενοι.⁷⁰⁴ If Luke's careless editing of Mark led to the unintentional impression that Jews carried out the crucifixion, why did he also remove the technical term ἀγγαρεύω that clearly referred to Roman soldiers? It is unlikely that Luke redacted Mark carelessly both in the omission of the mockery and abuse of Jesus by the Roman soldiers and in changing the vocabulary that implied Roman soldiers. Together these redactional changes seem to indicate Luke's deliberate attempt to shift the blame from Romans to Jews. The description of Simon of Cyrene seems to tip the scales in favour of Fitzmyer's interpretation that Luke intended to convey the impression that the chief priest, the rulers, and the people crucified Jesus.

Although I disagree with Brown on the question of what Luke intended to imply in the passion narrative, his criticism against Fitzmyer's interpretation needs to be taken seriously. It demonstrates that Luke's description of the Jewish involvement was vague in the crucifixion scene and somewhat inconsistent in the various summaries of Jesus's death in Acts. This has important consequences concerning how audiences would have interpreted Luke 23:26. Brown's argument that Luke's immediate audience would, in the light of their knowledge of Christian traditions, have understood "they" in verse 23:26 as a reference to Roman soldiers seems convincing. It seems reasonable to presume that in the first century the dominant view among Christians was that Roman soldiers crucified Jesus.

During the second century the situation was not as straightforward as Brown claims. The Gospel of Peter is a significant example that not all Christians thought that Roman soldiers crucified Jesus. Several

⁷⁰⁴ For a more detailed discussion see above chapter 3.

second-century authors and sources, which present a similar stance, are discussed in the following. It is always difficult to be certain how well our sources represent the popularity of the divergent traditions. The influence of the canonical gospels must have been substantial in the second century as well, but at the same time, a growing number of Christian authors attributed the guilt of the actual physical crucifixion to the Jewish people. Brown's claim that Christians would have never understood Luke 23:26 as a reference to Jews goes well beyond the evidence. Luke's vague passion narrative and contradictory summaries of that narrative left an unusual degree of freedom to the interpreter of the text. A reader who knew the passion narrative in the form of other canonical gospels would likely have understood Luke 23:26 as a reference to Roman soldiers. A firmly anti-Jewish reader, like the author of the Gospel of Peter, would or more precisely could have interpreted the passage as supporting the claim that the Jews crucified Jesus. Even if Luke had not intended to convey the impression that Jews crucified Jesus, later generations could have read the verse to support such claims.

Luke and the Gospel of Peter share the accusation that Jews physically crucified Jesus, but they differ in many important aspects. In Luke the responsibility and the actual physical crucifixion are primarily attributed to the Jewish leaders. They are mentioned more often and always before the people in the passion narrative. The Jewish people are mentioned only twice as being responsible for the crucifixion compared to the eight times the leaders face this accusation in the speeches of Acts. In Acts the leaders are mentioned more frequently and every time before the people. All this evidence implies that the various Jewish leaders held the primary responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus in Luke. The people are not without their share of guilt, but the impression is that they followed their leaders. Luke is also vague and inconsistent in creating this image, but the Gospel of Peter is perfectly clear and consistent in attributing the physical crucifixion to the Jewish people alone.

Henderson has analysed other early Christian texts that accuse Jewish people of killing Jesus. He examines First Thessalonians, Acts, Justin

Martyr and Melito, and compared them to the Gospel of Peter.⁷⁰⁵ Henderson's contribution suffers from the fact that he omitted Luke's gospel entirely in his discussion, but provides an analysis of the other anti-Jewish texts that have a possible relationship with the Gospel of Peter.

In First Thessalonians it is claimed that the Jews have killed Jesus. The accusation appears in the section 2:13–16, which also contains two other intriguing traditions that might have a connection with the Gospel of Peter. In this passage it said that the Jews fill up the measure of their sins and the wrath of God has finally come upon them.⁷⁰⁶

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. For you brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Jesus Christ which are in Judea; for you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all men by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they may be saved – so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last.

The interpretation of this passage is not without difficulties. The first of them is that its authenticity has been challenged. The question of the authenticity of section 2:13–16 is significant for the development of Christian anti-Judaism. A comprehensive argument against the authenticity of 1. Thess. 2:13–16 has been presented by Birger A. Pearson. He argues that this section is a later interpolation to the Pauline text, because the wrath of God that has fallen upon the Jews seems to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred two decades after Paul wrote his letter.⁷⁰⁷ However, there is no textual evidence to support this hypothesis.⁷⁰⁸ Therefore, the evidence against the authenticity of section 2:13–16 is not conclusive. This uncertainty is very unfortunate for the study of Christian anti-Judaism, but the situation is more favourable to the study of the anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter. Even if

⁷⁰⁵ Henderson 2011, 78–86.

⁷⁰⁶ Henderson 2011, 78–81.

⁷⁰⁷ Pearson 1971, 79–94.

⁷⁰⁸ Weatherly 1991, 79–98.

section 2:13–16 is a later interpolation, the interpolation would likely predate the composition of the Gospel of Peter.⁷⁰⁹

The Gospel of Peter describes in detail how the Jews killed the Lord and before his death the author adds a comment that “they fulfilled everything and filled the measure of sins upon their head” (Gos. Pet. 5:17). The First Thessalonians also accuses the Jews of killing the Lord and “so as always to fill up the measure of their sins”. First Thessalonians 2:16 and the Gospel of Peter 7:25 seem to agree that filling the measure of sins is followed by divine retribution. After Jesus’s death, the Jews realize their sins and acknowledge the judgement on Jerusalem (Gos. Pet. 7:25). If 1 Thess. 2:16 is a deutero-Pauline interpolation, its author would have seen a similar logic between the killing of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem. If the passage is from Paul and two decades earlier than the Jewish war, he would have had some other catastrophe in mind, but the connection between guilt for the death of Jesus and judgement on the Jews would have been the same. Even if the passage is an authentic part of Paul’s letter and the apostle to the Gentiles meant some other event than the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, later interpreters of the text in the second century could have understood it as a reference to the Jewish war. This interpretation requires some selective reading concerning the chronology of the events and the aorist tense in First Thessalonians 2:16, but sources demonstrate that the early Christian authors were more than capable of such creativity.

Intriguing as they are, the parallels between First Thessalonians and the Gospel of Peter are not substantial enough to establish a direct dependence between the texts. Verbal agreements are not exact or consecutive. There is no evidence of the influence of Pauline concepts or theology in the Gospel of Peter. The guilt for the death of Jesus, the sins it fulfilled and divine judgement in the form of the destruction of Jerusalem are themes that became popular in second century Christianity. The author of the Gospel of Peter did not need a copy of First Thessalonians in front of him to include these elements in his gospel. However, the Gospel of Peter looks very much like a passion narrative that has been rewritten from the perspective of

⁷⁰⁹ Henderson 2011, 81 n. 87.

First Thessalonians 2:15–16. Therefore, its influence should not be excluded either.

Henderson lists eight passages in Acts which attribute the guilt to the Jews, but he focuses primarily on those passages which include the notion that the Jewish people are claimed responsible for Jesus's death (Acts 3:13–17, 13:27).⁷¹⁰ Acts 3:11–26 describes Peter's speech to the Israelites in the temple, which narrates that, the Jewish people and their handed Jesus over to Pilate. Verse 13:27 was already discussed in the analysis of the burial and the conclusion was that it is a condensed description of Luke's passion narrative. In both these passages Pilate is in control of the proceedings and the Jewish leaders appear together with the people. Although there is a tendency to accuse the Jews for the death of Jesus in Acts, the accusations do not move beyond what is narrated in Luke's gospel. The blame is shared by Pilate, the Jewish leaders and the people. The primary responsibility, however, lies with the Jewish leaders. They are more frequently accused of killing Jesus and on two occasions they share the guilt with the people. There is no evidence in Acts to support the claim that the Jewish people crucified Jesus. An interpreter had to have an anti-Jewish intention to read Luke-Acts in order to conclude that it implies what the Gospel of Peter spells out.

In the second century the claim that the Jews killed Jesus becomes more widespread and explicit. Justin accused the Jews of killing (Dial. 16) and crucifying (Dial. 14, 17, 93) Jesus. However, Justin also attributes guilt to Pilate and soldiers.⁷¹¹ Melito's Homily is written throughout from the perspective that Israel has murdered Jesus. The guilt is attributed to the whole of Israel and no distinction is made between the people and leaders. Israel did not only murder Jesus, but also carried out the whole execution in a similar manner to the passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter. Melito is the first author who accuses the Jews of deicide.⁷¹² First Thessalonians 2:13–16, even if it is an interpolation, and Luke-Acts were written before the Gospel of Peter, but it cannot be demonstrated that the Dialogue with Trypho and Homily are earlier than the Gospel of Peter. Justin and Melito wrote their

⁷¹⁰ Henderson 2011, 81–82.

⁷¹¹ Henderson 2011, 82–83.

⁷¹² Henderson 2011, 83–86.

texts roughly at the same time as the author of the Gospel of Peter and are witness to the growing anti-Jewish tradition in the second century.

The author of the Gospel of Peter knew Luke, but it is difficult to say whether First Thessalonians was known to him. The relative chronology of the Gospel of Peter and Justin or Melito is difficult to establish. It applies to the possible influence between them or the direction of that influence. It remains uncertain whether the Gospel of Peter is earlier than the writings that explicitly accuse the Jews of killing Jesus. It is even less likely that it influenced all of them. What we can say with some probability is that the accusation was known among Christian authors in the second century, but tracing the steps of the development of this tradition and the possible relationships between the texts seems too hypothetical. The claim that the Jews killed Jesus was probably not an invention of the author of the Gospel of Peter, but rather something he had come across in the Christian polemics against the Jews. Luke had hinted this in a rather vague manner and preserved contradictory traditions of the Roman involvement. The author of the Gospel of Peter also had to omit the contradictory tradition of the Roman soldiers in Mark, Matthew and John as the crucifiers of Jesus – including the mocking and abuse that has also been attributed to the Jewish people in the Gospel of Peter. He wrote down, possibly for the first time, a narrative where the Jewish people alone carry out the crucifixion of Jesus. The accusation that the Jewish people killed Jesus was known to the author and he could rely on Luke for some details, but the complete and explicit anti-Jewish passion narrative seems to have been his own innovation.

5.3. The Mockery and Abuse

3:6 Οἱ δὲ λαβόντες τὸν Κύριον ὥθουν αὐτὸν τρέχοντες καὶ ἔλεγον· Σύρωμεν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐξουσίαν αὐτοῦ ἐσχηκότες. 3:7 Καὶ πορφύραν αὐτὸν περιέβαλον καὶ ἐκάθισαν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ καθέδραν κρίσεως λέγοντες· Δικαίως κρῖνε, βασιλεῦ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ. 3:8 Καὶ τις αὐτῶν ἐνεγκὼν στέφανον ἀκάνθινον ἔθηκεν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς τοῦ Κυρίου, 3:9 καὶ ἕτεροι ἐστῶτες ἐνέπτυον αὐτοῦ ταῖς ὄψεσι καὶ ἄλλοι τὰς σιαγόνας αὐτοῦ ἐράπισαν, ἕτεροι καλάμῳ ἐνυσσον αὐτὸν καὶ τινες αὐτὸν ἐμάστιζον λέγοντες· Ταύτη τῇ τιμῇ τιμήσωμεν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

3:6 And they took the Lord and pushed him while running and said: “Let us drag the Son of God, we have authority over him.” 3:7 And they dressed him in purple robe and sat him on the seat of judgement and said: “Judge righteously King of Israel.” 3:8 And one of them brought a crown of thorns and placed it on the head of the Lord. 3:9 And others who were standing there spat at his eyes and others struck him on the cheeks, others prodded him with a reed and some scourged him and said: “With this honour let us honour the Son of God.”

The Royal Mockery

The Gospel of Peter describes the royal mockery of Jesus in verses 3:7–3:8. The Jewish people dress Jesus in a purple robe (Gos. Pet. 3:7a) and place a crown of thorns on his head (Gos. Pet. 3:8). Both details are found in the mockery of Jesus in Mark 15:17 and Matthew 27:28–29a, where Roman soldiers mock and abuse him immediately after the Roman trial. In John 19:2 a mockery with a purple robe and a crown of thorns appears in the middle of the Roman trial.⁷¹³ A comparison of the parallel narratives shows that the Gospel of Peter not only shares much of the content of the royal mockery with Mark, Matthew and John, but also a number of verbal agreements with these three gospels. In the Gospel of Peter the Jewish people put a purple robe on him (πορφύραν αὐτὸν περιέβαλλον). In this particular detail the Gospel of Peter shares vocabulary with Mark 15:17a and John 19:2b. Among the canonical gospels only Mark uses the same word of the purple robe (πορφύραν) as the Gospel of Peter. In John the purple robe is described with slightly different words (ἱμάτιον πορφυροῦν). The action of the Roman soldiers is described with the same vocabulary (περιέβαλον αὐτόν), although these words are in the reverse order in the Gospel of Peter and the gospels use a different verb tense. Matthew also narrates that soldiers dressed Jesus in a purple robe, but he used different vocabulary (κοκκίνην περιέθηκαν αὐτῷ).⁷¹⁴

⁷¹³ Foster 2010, 262. The purple robe and crown of thorns are not mentioned by Luke who omitted the whole scene of Roman mockery and abuse. He relocated some of the tradition into to the trial before Herod. (Foster 2010, 261–262, 269.)

⁷¹⁴ Foster 2010, 261–263. Matthew possibly downplayed the royal purple cloth of Mark and presented a more modest scarlet robe. (Foster 2010, 263.) Matthew’s description of the robe is more realistic about the clothing available to the Roman soldiers. In the analysis of the guard at the tomb narrative it was shown that the author of the Gospel of Peter did not appreciate Matthew’s attempts to create a realistic narrative. Therefore, it is likely that preferred the more magnificent purple robe of Mark and John over Matthew’s more realistic, but modest scarlet robe. The question where the Jewish people acquired a purple robe is not reflected by the author of the Gospel of Peter.

In the description of the crown of thorns that was placed on the head of Jesus (στέφανον ἀκάνθινον ἔθηκεν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς τοῦ Κυρίου) the Gospel of Peter shares vocabulary with Matthew and Mark. The Gospel of Peter 3:7 and Mark 15:17 have exactly the same description of the crown of thorns (ἀκάνθινον στέφανον), although in the Gospel of Peter they are again in the reverse order. Matthew 27:29 describes slightly differently the crown of thorns (στέφανον ἐξ ἀκανθῶν). John includes two references to the crown of thorns. In the first, the soldiers put a crown of thorns (στέφανον ἐξ ἀκανθῶν) on Jesus's head (John 19:2b). In the second reference in John 19:5 Jesus wears the crown of thorns (ἀκάνθινον στέφανον). The vocabulary of the placement of the crown of thorns on the head of the Lord in the Gospel of Peter is closer to Matthew than Mark. The Markan sentence περιτιθέασιν αὐτῷ πλέξαντες ἀκάνθινον στέφανον is somewhat awkward. Matthew changed it to a more fluid πλέξαντες στέφανον ἐξ ἀκανθῶν ἐπέθηκαν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ, which improves Mark's awkward sentence. John's vocabulary and the structure of the sentence πλέξαντες στέφανον ἐξ ἀκανθῶν ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῦ τῇ κεφαλῇ is similar to Matthew. The Gospel of Peter is close to Matthew's vocabulary ἔθηκεν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς τοῦ Κυρίου. In the Gospel of Peter the unnecessary repetition of the prefix ἐπὶ is omitted and the verb is not in the plural ἐπέθηκαν, but in the singular ἔθηκεν. In the Gospel of Peter the crown of thorns is put on the head of the Lord. As we have seen several times before, the author of the Gospel of Peter prefers to replace the proper name Jesus with the title Lord and in this verse he has inserted his favourite title to replace the pronoun αὐτοῦ. In Matthew and the Gospel of Peter the purple robe is placed on Jesus before the crown of thorns is placed on his head, while the order is reversed in Mark and John. The reversed order and the shared vocabulary indicate that the author of the Gospel of Peter drew on Matthew's description of the royal mockery.⁷¹⁵

πορφύραν αὐτὸν
 περιέβαλλον (Gos. Pet. 3:7a)
 στέφανον ἀκάνθινον
 ἔθηκεν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς

αὐτὸν πορφύραν (Mark 15:17a)
 περιέβαλον αὐτόν (John 19:2b)
 ἀκάνθινον στέφανον (Mark 15:17b)
 ἐπέθηκαν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς

⁷¹⁵ Foster 2010, 269, 271–272.

In between the robing and the crowning of the Lord the author of the Gospel of Peter has inserted that the Jews set Jesus on the judgement seat (ἐπὶ καθέδραν κρίσεως) and asked him to judge righteously (Δικαίως κρίνε) while sarcastically acclaiming him as the king of Israel (Gos. Pet. 3:7b). Verse 3:7b is comprised of three different elements. Of these three elements only the epithet king of Israel has a parallel in the royal mockery of the canonical gospels (Mark 15:18; Matt. 27:29; John 19:3) where the Roman soldiers hail Jesus as the king of the Jews (Χαῖρε, ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων). Another difference is that in the Gospel of Peter the sarcastic acclaim is placed in between the robing and the crowning, but in the canonical narrative it is placed after them. In the Gospel of Peter the title king of Israel appears in the inscription on the cross while all the canonical gospels have the title king of the Jews. I will argue in this latter context that the author of the Gospel of Peter changed the reference from the Jews to Israel, because he replaced the Roman soldiers with the Jewish people in the passion narrative, and the king of Israel was more appropriate than the king of the Jews for the Jewish crucifiers. The detailed analysis of this difference is, however, postponed to the analysis of the crucifixion scene.⁷¹⁶

Among the canonical gospels only John 19:13 has a reference to sitting on a judgement seat. In the Gospel of Peter Jesus is set on a judgement seat (ἐκάθισαν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ καθέδραν κρίσεως) while John 19:3 (ἤγαγεν ἔξω τὸν Ἰησοῦν, καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐπὶ βήματος) can be translated with two distinctive meanings. If ἐκάθισεν is translated here as a transitive verb, Pilate sat Jesus on the seat. If the verb is interpreted as an intransitive verb, Pilate himself sat on the seat. Syntactically the verse could indicate that Pilate or Jesus sat on the judgement seat, but in the narrative context of the narrative, the latter alternative is probably what John intended.⁷¹⁷ In John 19:3 Pilate sits on the judgement seat, but the ambiguous phrase in John enabled an interpretation of the scene as a reference to Jesus sitting on the judgement seat. The author of the Gospel of Peter seized this opportunity and placed this tradition into the

⁷¹⁶ See below chapter 5.3.

⁷¹⁷ Crossan 1988, 144; Henderson 2011, 53 n. 4; See Foster 2010, 263–266.

royal mocking scene. The Jewish people make a mockery of Jesus as the king of Israel who sits on the judgement seat.

The third element in verse 3:7b does not have a parallel in the canonical gospels. The Jews instruct Jesus to judge righteously (Δικαίως κρῖνε). Scholars have interpreted this detail in the light of prophetic proof texts, regardless of their understanding of the composition history of the Gospel of Peter.⁷¹⁸ The theme of a righteous judgement is common in the Old Testament and various texts have been proposed to lie in the background of this tradition.⁷¹⁹ Although the theme of a righteous judgement is found in many Old Testament texts, only Isaiah 58:2 (αἰτοῦσίν με νῦν κρίσιν δικαίαν) shares with the Gospel of Peter the asking for a righteous judgement.

It has been argued that this is one example of the author's familiarity with an early Christian testimonia collection. This interpretation has been supported by the utilization of this verse in other Christian sources. Justin cited Isaiah 58:2 in 1 Apology 35 ("They now ask a judgement of me") and as the fulfilment of the prophecy Justin wrote that "they tormented Him and set Him on the judgement seat, and said, Judge us".⁷²⁰ It is possible that the author of the Gospel of Peter drew this detail from a testimonia collection. However, verse 3:7b can be explained through dependence on the canonical gospels and a direct reflection of the Old Testament in the light of the canonical traditions. The author of the Gospel of Peter combined the allusion to Isaiah 58:2 with the traditions of the judgement seat and the king of Israel. These seem to be derived from the canonical gospels, but they do not have a parallel in Isaiah 58:2. The prophetic text Isaiah 58:2 is cited for the first time in Justin's 1 Apology 35 and Dialogue 15.⁷²¹ The allusion to this verse in the Gospel of Peter 3:7b seems to be a later reflection of the Scriptures in the latter half of the second century. The other two elements of Gos. Pet. 3:7b were created on the basis of two originally independent traditions of the canonical gospels. They have a much earlier attestation in Christian literature. It is likely that the interpretation of Jesus sitting on the judgement seat and the tradition of the king of Israel led to utilization of the common Old Testament motif of a

⁷¹⁸ Crossan 1988, 144; Henderson 2011, 70–73.

⁷¹⁹ Henderson 2011, 71 refers to Ps 9:8, Ps 96:13, Ps 98:8–9, Prov 31:9, Isa 11:3–4 and Jer 11:18–23.

⁷²⁰ Crossan 1988, 144–145; Henderson 2011, 72. See also Foster 2010, 264–266; Augustin 2014, 11.

⁷²¹ Crossan 1988, 144.

righteous judgement and in particular Isaiah 58:2, where the Jewish people ask for a righteous judgement from the Lord. Therefore, the Gospel of Peter verse 3:7b is dependent on the canonical gospels and the prophetic text that is also behind this verse is a later Christian reflection on the Scriptures that continued to supply new details to the passion narrative.

Another relevant factor that needs to be discussed is the above-mentioned difference between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels in the structure of the royal mockery. The different sequence of the royal mockery can be explained through the chiasmic structure of the mockery and abuse scene in the Gospel of Peter.⁷²² The structure of the mocking and abuse in the Gospel of Peter indicates that it is not the earliest version of the tradition. In the Gospel of Peter the abuse and mockery are narrated in succession. The Jewish people first put a purple robe on him, place him on the judgement seat, ask the king of Israel to judge righteously and put on the crown of thorns. In Mark the soldiers dress him in a purple robe, place the crown of thorns on his head and hail him as the king of the Jews. Then they spit on Jesus and strike him with a reed. After the spitting and the striking with the reed the soldiers kneel and bow down before him, that is return to the royal mocking after abusing Jesus. Matthew seems to have realized the awkward sequence of the Markan pericope. He placed the kneeling right after the robing and crowning of Jesus, but before the spitting and striking with the reed. Also in John the robing, crowning and hailing as the king of the Jews are all before the striking. The priority of the Gospel of Peter would require that the smooth narrative logic of the royal mocking and the abuse was confused by Mark and again restructured by Matthew. A more plausible explanation is that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew and followed the improved Matthean version of the scene. Moreover, in Mark, Matthew and John the scourging precedes the whole abuse and mockery scene. In the Gospel of Peter it is placed as the last abuse (see below). This seems to be the most natural place of the scourging as the final and most serious abuse before the crucifixion. Therefore, the sequence of the events in the royal mocking and

⁷²² Crossan 1988, 141.

abuse (Gos. Pet. 3:6–3:9) indicates that the Gospel of Peter preserves a more developed version of the tradition than the canonical gospels.

The abuse and fulfilment of Scriptures

In the Gospel of Peter the abuse of Jesus is described in verse 3:9. The Jewish people spit on his face, strike him on the cheeks, pierce him with a reed and scourge him before the crucifixion. The influence of the Old Testament prophetic texts is apparent in this verse of the Gospel of Peter. In particular, Isaiah 50:6 stands behind the description of Jesus's abuse. Three of the four elements in verse 3:9 are mentioned in Isaiah 50:6 and there are notable verbal agreements between these texts.

Isaiah 50:6

τὸν νῶτόν μου δέδωκα εἰς μάστιγας,
τὰς δὲ σιαγόνας μου εἰς ῥαπίσματα,
τὸ δὲ πρόσωπόν μου οὐκ ἀπέστρεψα
ἀπὸ αἰσχύνῃς ἐμπτυσμάτων.

Gospel of Peter 3:9

καὶ ἕτεροι ἐστῶτες ἐνέπτυνον
αὐτοῦ ταῖς ὄψεσι καὶ ἄλλοι
τὰς σιαγόνας αὐτοῦ ἐράπισαν,
ἕτεροι καλάμῳ ἐνυσσον αὐτὸν
καὶ τινες αὐτὸν ἐμάστιζον

The Gospel of Peter presents the three elements of Isaiah 50:6 in a reversed order. There are further differences between Isaiah 50:6 and the Gospel of Peter 3:9 in the vocabulary that is used of the scourging, striking on the cheeks and spitting. The Gospel of Peter narrates that the Jews spat on his eyes (ἐνέπτυνον ὄψεσι). The reference to eyes can be interpreted as a parallel to the face (πρόσωπόν),⁷²³ but the gospel narrative nevertheless fulfils the prophecy of spitting. The striking on the cheeks (τὰς σιαγόνας ἐράπισαν) is a direct reflection of the Old Testament text δέδωκα τὰς σιαγόνας μου εἰς ῥαπίσματα. In the Gospel of Peter the verb of scourging (ἐμάστιζον) is from the same root as in Isaiah 50:6 (τὸν νῶτόν μου δέδωκα εἰς μάστιγας). The combination of all three elements overshadows the minor differences and necessary changes

⁷²³ Foster 2010, 274. Schaeffer 1995, 26 questions this interpretation.

from the prophetic text to a gospel narrative. In terms of content and vocabulary, the Gospel of Peter is closer to the prophetic text than any of the canonical gospels, which are also witnesses to a varying degree of the influence of Isaiah 50:6 in the passion narratives. The question is whether the author of the Gospel of Peter drew directly on an exegetical interpretation of the passion prophecy or was he influenced by the canonical gospels?

In the canonical gospels the spitting, striking and scourging are placed in the Jewish trial (Mark 14:65, Matt. 26:67–68), in the Roman trial (John 19:2–3), in the abuse of the Roman soldiers (Mark 15:16–15:20) and in Herod's trial (Luke 22:63–65).⁷²⁴ The three elements of Isaiah 50:6 do not appear together in any of the canonical gospels, as they do in the Gospel of Peter. Mark and especially Matthew establish a connection with all three of the elements in the passion narrative. Luke seems to have omitted all direct references to the prophetic proof text, while John connected the scourging and the striking together.

In Mark some members of the Sanhedrin spat on him (ἤρξαντό τινες ἐμπτύειν αὐτῷ) and struck him (κολαφίζειν αὐτόν) after the trial (Mark 14:65a). The guards also struck him (Mark 14:65b). In this latter instance, the vocabulary (ράπισμασιν αὐτόν ἔλαβον) is closer to Isaiah 50:6. In Mark the scourging appears immediately after the Roman trial. Pilate hands Jesus over to be flogged (φραγελλώσας) before the crucifixion (Mark 15:15). Although Mark shares the theme of scourging, the vocabulary (μάστιγας) differs from Isaiah 50:6. In the Roman mockery and abuse of Jesus, the soldiers hit him on the head with a reed (ἔτυπον αὐτοῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν καλὰ μῶ) and spit on him (ἐνέπτυσον) (Mark 15:19). While the latter seems to reflect Isaiah 50:6, it is unlikely that Mark intended or understood the former as a fulfilment of the Scriptures.

Matthew followed Mark closely in the Jewish and Roman trials, but also connected the events of the passion closer to the prophetic texts. Matthew 26:67 retains the spitting of the members of the Sanhedrin and explains that they spat in his face (ἐνέπτυσαν πρόσωπον). This created a more explicit allusion to the prophetic text. Matthew omitted the striking of the

⁷²⁴ Foster 2010, 272.

guards. Instead the members of the council both strike and slap (ἐράπισαν) Jesus. The verb ραπίζω implies striking on the cheeks, although this is not explicitly mentioned. In agreement with his Markan source, Pilate hands over Jesus to be flogged (φραγελλώσας) before the crucifixion (Matt. 27:26). The soldiers also spit on him and hit him on the head with a reed (Matt. 27:30).

Luke omitted all references to Isaiah 50:6. Spitting and scourging are not mentioned at all and the striking (Luke 22:63) is described with the verb δέροντες, which does not share vocabulary with Isaiah 50:6. John does not mention spitting either, but both the scourging (ἐμαστίγωσεν) in John 19:1 and the striking (ἔδωκεν ῥάπισμα) in John 19:3 are closer to the vocabulary of Isaiah 50:6. This indicates that John was aware of the prophetic text behind the description of Jesus's abuse.

Crossan argues that the details of the abuse in the passion narrative were created on the basis of the passion prophecy of Isaiah 50:6. The tradition began with an early exegetical reflection on the proof text. The earliest narrative form of the abuse is the version preserved in the Gospel of Peter, where all three elements of Isaiah are presented together. The four evangelists each drew on this early passion narrative.⁷²⁵ This hypothesis encounters several unlikely redactional changes. Crossan's theory presupposes that Mark did not understand the Scriptural background of the Gospel of Peter 3:9. Mark would have divided the three elements of the prophetic text into two separate contexts. The striking was located at the Sanhedrin trial and the scourging in the Roman trial. In the former, Mark would have omitted the reference to cheeks and in the latter changed the verb with the same root as in Isaiah for the scourging. The spitting would have been placed in both contexts, but neither included a reference to Jesus's face. It seems that Mark did his best to not demonstrate the fulfilment of the Scriptures in the passion narrative. Although Matthew was aware of the background of Isaiah 50:6 and adds the explicit statement that Jesus was spat in the face, he preferred to follow Mark and omitted the more explicit references to Isaiah 50:6 from the Gospel of Peter 3:9. Why did not Matthew enhance the connection between the prophetic proof text and the passion of Jesus, which is a feature of his

⁷²⁵ Crossan 1988, 26, 141–142, 147, 156–159.

redaction of Mark, if he knew the Gospel of Peter 3:9? John combined the scourging and striking, but omitted the spitting.⁷²⁶ The redaction of the authors of the canonical gospels requires some kind of an explanation, but Crossan does not offer any insight as to why they dismembered the fulfilment of the prophetic text. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine the development of the tradition in the manner presented above.

The author of the Gospel of Peter rewrote canonical traditions in the light of Isaiah 50:6. The author of the Gospel of Peter knew all three elements of Isaiah 50:6 from the canonical gospels. Mark and Matthew included the spitting both in the Jewish and the Roman trials. The striking was also an element in the Markan and the Matthean Jewish trial. The scourging was also narrated in these gospels and in John the verb is the same as in the Gospel of Peter. The author of the Gospel of Peter could have drawn all these elements from the canonical gospels. He also brought the passion narrative closer to the proof text by combining the three elements and increasing the shared vocabulary. This redaction presumes that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew Isaiah 50:6 and recognized its fulfilment in the details of the canonical passion narratives. The various allusions to the prophetic proof texts in the passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter indicate that this is very likely. The reversed order of the elements seems to have resulted from the improvement of the flow of the narrative, i.e. placing the scourging last. We have already seen that the author of the Gospel of Peter relocated extensive sections of the narrative (Joseph's request, the confession of the soldiers, Pilate's declaration of innocence, and the separation of the empty tomb narrative from the middle of the guard at the tomb narrative). Therefore, it is plausible that the author of the Gospel of Peter would have combined the elements of Isaiah 50:6 from the Jewish trial and the abuse immediately after the Roman trial. The author of the Gospel of Peter rewrote the abuse in order to establish a more explicit connection between the passion of Jesus and the proof text.

The argument that the technique of allusions instead of explicit citations supports the priority of the Gospel of Peter fails to convince in this

⁷²⁶ Luke's omission of the fulfilment of the passion prophecy becomes even more inexplicable if we presume that he knew the *Cross Gospel* alongside Mark.

particular case. In the canonical gospels references to Isaiah 50:6 are vague allusions and in some cases it is not entirely clear whether Isaiah 50:6 stands behind a similar action in the canonical passion narratives. In the Gospel of Peter 3:9 all the elements of Isaiah appear together and the connection to the prophetic text is more explicit. Another argument for the priority of the Gospel of Peter is that in the apocryphon the abuse has not been divided into separate scenes. It has to be remembered that we do not have knowledge whether there was a separate trial before the Jewish authorities or Herod in the Gospel of Peter, and whether that trial included an abuse scene. Therefore, we do not know if the author of the Gospel of Peter used Isaiah 50:6 in a description of an abuse in another trial scene. If there was only one abuse scene in the Gospel of Peter, it can be explained by the fact that in the Gospel of Peter only the Jews are responsible for the death of Jesus. The author of the Gospel of Peter did not hold Pilate or the Roman soldiers responsible. Therefore, the striking and spitting of the Jewish trial, the scrounging commanded by Pilate and the spitting of the Roman soldiers could all be brought together into one scene where all the inflictions against Jesus are attributed to the Jewish people. In a narrative where the responsibility is solely in the hands of the Jews, only a single abuse might have sufficed. Therefore, only one abuse in the Gospel of Peter is not necessarily an earlier version. However, unless a new manuscript discovery is made, we do not know whether there was a second abuse in the non-extant section of the Gospel of Peter. It is unfounded to reconstruct a thesis upon evidence that does not exist.

The author of the Gospel of Peter inserted in the middle of the three elements of Isaiah 50:6 a tradition that other Jews struck Jesus with a reed (καλάμῳ ἔνυσσον). The prophetic text behind this tradition is Zechariah 12:10b, which reads, “they shall look on him whom they have pierced”. In John 19:34 the Roman soldiers pierce Jesus’s side with a lance. John 19:37 explicitly refers to the fulfilment of prophecy and cites Zechariah 12:10b. The reed is mentioned in the abuse scenes of Mark and Matthew, where the Roman soldiers strike Jesus on the head with a reed.⁷²⁷ This does not seem to

⁷²⁷ Matthew also used the reed as a sceptre in the royal mocking (Foster 2010, 277).

reflect any Old Testament text. In the Gospel of Peter the striking with a reed has become prodding with a reed in the abuse before the crucifixion. The redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter accomplished two objectives. It explained the puzzling tradition of the reed and preserved the fulfilment of Zechariah 12:10b. The new context of the piercing explains the change from a lance to a reed. The piercing with a lance before the crucifixion would have led to an expedient death and nullified the purpose of the crucifixion. This explains why the lance has been replaced with a reed by the author. In this new context he had to omit the lance and he replaced it with the reed that was mentioned in Mark's and Matthew's parallel narrative. These changes allowed him to retain the fulfilment of the prophecy in Zechariah 12:10b. However, he did not draw upon this tradition directly from the Scriptures. It was mediated to him through the traditions of the canonical gospels.

5.4. The Crucifixion

4:10 Καὶ ἔνεγκον δύο κακούργους καὶ ἐσταύρωσαν ἀνὰ μέσον αὐτῶν τὸν Κύριον· αὐτὸς δὲ ἐσιώπα ὡς μηδὲν πόνον ἔχων· 4:11 καὶ ὅτε ὄρθωσαν τὸν σταυρὸν ἐπέγραψαν ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ. 4:12 Καὶ τεθεικότες τὰ ἐνδύματα ἐμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ διεμερίσαντο, καὶ λαχμὸν ἔβαλον ἐπ' αὐτοῖς. 4:13 Εἷς δὲ τις τῶν κακούργων ἐκείνων ὠνειδισεν αὐτοὺς λέγων· Ἡμεῖς διὰ τὰ κακὰ ἃ ἐποιήσαμεν οὕτω πεπόνθαμεν, οὗτος δὲ σωτὴρ γενόμενος τῶν ἀνθρώπων τί ἡδίκησεν ὑμᾶς; 4:14 Καὶ ἀγανακτήσαντες ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἐκέλευσαν ἵνα μὴ σκελοκοπηθῇ ὅπως βασανιζόμενος ἀποθάνῃ.

4:10 And they brought two criminals and crucified the Lord between them, but he remained silent as if having no pain. 4:11 And when they set up the cross they wrote that this is the King of Israel. 4:12 And they laid down the garments before him, divided them and cast lots for them. 4:13 But one of the criminals rebuked them and said: "We are suffering in this manner for the evil we have done, but this man, who has become the saviour of men, what wrong has he done to you? 4:14 And they became enraged at him and commanded that his legs should not be broken that he might die in torment.

The crucifixion scene in the Gospel of Peter is similar to the parallel narratives of the canonical gospels. Jesus is crucified between two criminals, but he remained silent, as if he felt no pain (Gos. Pet. 4:10). An inscription king of Israel is placed on the cross (Gos. Pet. 4:11). The Jews divide his clothes

among themselves and cast lots for them (Gos. Pet. 4:12). Jesus's crucifixion between two criminals, the inscription the King of Israel and the casting of lots for his cloths have a parallel in all four canonical gospels. The suffering in silence is a unique feature of the crucifixion scene of the Gospel of Peter, but the tradition of silence under interrogation appears in the Jewish and Roman trials of the canonical gospels. Mark and Matthew have minor verbal agreements with the Gospel of Peter 4:10–4:12. Although the tradition of the crucifixion between two thieves is found in the four canonical gospels, the Gospel of Peter has the closest verbal agreements with Luke and John. After these verbal agreements, the crucifixion scene of the Gospel of Peter continues with traditions that are found in Luke and John. The penitent thief rebukes the Jewish crucifiers and confesses Jesus as the saviour of men (Gos. Pet. 4:13). They become enraged and command that his legs should not to be broken so that he may die in agony (Gos. Pet. 4:14). The tradition of the penitent thief is described in Luke 23:39–43 and the non-breaking of legs in John 19:31–33.

Dewey has claimed that there is no dependence between verses 4:10–4:14 of the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels.⁷²⁸ Crossan argues that this section of the narrative clearly demonstrates the priority of the Gospel of Peter.⁷²⁹ Crossan's thesis of the priority of the early passion narrative imbedded in the Gospel of Peter stirred strong opposition particularly in the crucifixion scene. Green compares the vocabulary of the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels in the crucifixion scene and argues that the former is dependent on the latter. He explains the differences through the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter.⁷³⁰ Kirk also argues in favour of the priority of the canonical gospels.⁷³¹ Brown interprets that the Gospel of Peter 4:10–4:14 was created on the basis of the Lucan crucifixion narrative, which the author of the Gospel of Peter redacted from his anti-Jewish perspective.⁷³²

⁷²⁸ Dewey 1990, 109–110.

⁷²⁹ Crossan 1988, 160–197.

⁷³⁰ Green 1987, 296–298.

⁷³¹ Kirk 1994, 575–583.

⁷³² Brown 1987, 328–329.

The Jewish people bring two malefactors and crucify the Lord between them (ἡνεγκον δύο κακούργους ἐσταύρωσαν μέσον αὐτῶν τὸν κύριον). The four canonical gospels include the tradition of crucifixion between two thieves, but the Gospel of Peter 4:10a shares vocabulary primarily with Luke and John. In Luke 23:32 two malefactors are brought to be crucified with Jesus (ἡγοντο... κακούργοι δύο). Luke and the Gospel of Peter alone call those who were crucified with Jesus malefactors (κακούργοι). The same term is used again in the penitent thief tradition in both gospels (Luke 23:39, Gos. Pet. 4:13). Mark 15:27 and Matthew 27:38 call the other two crucified men “robbers” (δύο ληστές) and John 19:18 calls them “others” (ἄλλους δύο).⁷³³

The latter half of verse Gos. Pet. 4:10a (μέσον αὐτῶν τὸν κύριον) has a close parallel in John 19:18. In the fourth gospel the Roman soldiers crucify Jesus between two others (μέσον δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν). In Mark 15:27 and Matt. 27:38 one criminal is crucified on the right side of Jesus and the other on the left (ἓνα ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ ἓνα ἐξ εὐωνύμων αὐτοῦ).⁷³⁴ Luke has slightly rephrased the tradition (ὃν μὲν ἐκ δεξιῶν ὃν δὲ ἐξ ἀριστερῶν). In the Gospel of Peter the proper name Jesus is not mentioned and the author prefers the title Lord instead. The omission of the proper name Jesus is a typical feature of the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter.⁷³⁵

In the Gospel of Peter the verb σταυρόω is in the aorist tense ἐσταύρωσαν. Luke 23:33 and John 19:18 both have the verb in the same aorist tense ἐσταύρωσαν, while Mark 15:27 and Matthew 27:38 have a present tense.⁷³⁶ In other words the Gospel of Peter shares the same verb form in the middle of Lucan and Johannine vocabulary. The verbal agreement between the Gospel of Peter verse 4:10a and the third and fourth gospel can be summarized as follows:

⁷³³ Green 1987, 296–297; Crossan 1988, 166–169; Foster 2010, 288–289 n. 289.

⁷³⁴ Crossan 1988, 166–167; Foster 2010, 290.

⁷³⁵ Green 1987, 296–297. Green 1987, 297 n. 13 presents an extensive list of verses where the canonical gospels have the proper name Jesus and an alternative expression is preferred in the Gospel of Peter. See also Foster 2010, 290.

⁷³⁶ Crossan 1988, 167, 171. Mark uses the active present (σταυροῦσιν) and Matthew the passive present (σταυροῦνται) forms.

ἤνεγκον δύο κακούργους
ἐσταύρωσαν
μέσον αὐτῶν τὸν κύριον

ἤγοντο κακούργοι δύο (Luke 23:32)
ἐσταύρωσαν (Luke 23:33, John 19:18)
μέσον δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν (John 19:18)

These verbal agreements between the gospels indicate a literary dependence between the gospels. Crossan argues that Luke and John drew on the traditions and vocabulary preserved in the Gospel of Peter 4:10a. He supports his argument by noting that the Gospel of Peter gives the impression that the malefactors are more important than the Lord. In Mark the emphasis is reversed as the thieves are crucified with Jesus, one on his right side and the other on his left.⁷³⁷ However, it is more probable that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on Luke and John. Crossan's theory demands that Mark and Matthew completely omitted the vocabulary of the *Cross Gospel*. Luke and John then used different phrases of the Gospel of Peter 4:10a in their crucifixion narratives. We have earlier seen how unlikely it is that Luke and John never agree with each other and against Mark when they used various traditions of the *Cross Gospel*.⁷³⁸ In verse 4:10a this unlikely redaction extends to the vocabulary as well. The combination of the vocabulary of Luke and John is a more plausible explanation of the verbal agreements. The crucifixion scene of the Gospel of Peter 4:13–4:14 shares the tradition of the penitent thief with Luke and the non-breaking of legs with John. This further supports the conclusion that the author of the Gospel of Peter used Luke and John in the beginning of the crucifixion scene. Moreover, the trajectory of the tradition is more coherent if the Gospel of Peter is dependent on the canonical gospels. The tradition of the crucified criminals has been influenced by the proof text “he was counted among the criminals” (Isa 53:12b). John 19:18 is closer to this tradition than the synoptic gospels. John's desire to emphasize the fulfilment of the Scriptures explains the expression in the fourth gospel. The passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter also demonstrates an attempt to create a more explicit allusion to the passion prophecies.⁷³⁹ This redactional

⁷³⁷ Crossan 1988, 166.

⁷³⁸ See above chapter 2.2.

⁷³⁹ See above chapter 5.2.

tendency explains why the author of the Gospel of Peter preferred John's version in the phrasing of the crucifixion.

Silence under suffering

In the Gospel of Peter the crucified Jesus remains silent (αὐτὸς δὲ ἐσιωπα). The silence of Jesus is related to the question of the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. The author of the Gospel of Peter also adds a comment that Jesus was silent either as if he felt no pain or because he felt no pain (ὥς μηδὲν πόνον ἔχων). This is a crucial verse in the discussion of the possible docetic Christology of the Gospel of Peter.⁷⁴⁰ In the gospel tradition suffering in silence is a unique feature of the Gospel of Peter. In the canonical gospels Jesus remained silent under interrogation. In Mark and Matthew Jesus remained silent in the Jewish trial and in John 19:9 he refuses to give an answer to Pilate (ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀποκρίσιν οὐκ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ). The closest verbal agreement with the tradition of silence in verse 4:10b is in the trial before Sanhedrin in Mark and Matthew.⁷⁴¹

Mark 14:61	ὁ δὲ ἐσιωπα
Matt. 26:63	ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐσιωπα
Gos. Pet. 4:10b	αὐτὸς δὲ ἐσιωπα

The verbal agreement between the Gospel of Peter and Matthew and Mark is not significant enough to support a dependence between the gospels, even if the omission of the use of the proper name Jesus in Matthew is regarded as a typical feature of the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. The tradition of silent suffering is placed in different contexts. In this particular case, literary dependence can be argued only on the basis of the entire evidence. If a dependence between the Gospel of Peter and Matthew or Mark is accepted, the question of the direction of the dependence needs to be examined in the light of the tradition history.

⁷⁴⁰ Foster 2010, 292.

⁷⁴¹ Foster 2010, 292–293.

The argument that the Gospel of Peter preserves the earliest tradition of silence during the passion is supported by the claim that it is based on a passion prophecy. The tradition of silence under suffering appears in the fourth Song of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53:7.⁷⁴²

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

Another relevant passion prophecy is Isaiah 50:7, which may also include an allusion to silence under suffering. However, this passion prophecy is very illusive and it is not certain whether it is alluded to in the early Christian texts or not. In the third Song of the Suffering Servant the phrase “I have set my face like a flint” may refer to silence. Crossan has demonstrated that the early Christian texts that are not dependent on the canonical gospels refer to Jesus’s silence under suffering. The first time the tradition of silence under suffering appears in sources is from the last decade of the first century. In Acts 8:32–33 the Ethiopian eunuch reads from Isaiah 53:7b–8a and Philip interprets it as a reference to Jesus. There may be an allusion to Isaiah 50:7 in 1 Peter 2:23, but the allusion is illusive at best. Barnabas 5:2b quotes Isaiah 53:5–7, but omits the references to silence (Isa 53:7ac). In Barnabas 5:14b the reference to silence (“I have set my face as a solid rock”) is uncertain. This interpretation is supported by a reference to silence in the Sibylline Oracles 8:288–293. In this passage striking, spitting and scourging, which are mentioned in Isaiah 50:6, appear before the phrase “I have set my face like a flint”. In the Odes of Solomon 31:10–11 both the silence and the rock are mentioned. In his commentary on Luke 22:42–44, Dionysius of Alexandria also mentions these four elements of Isaiah 50:6–7. Crossan concludes that the tradition of Jesus’s suffering was derived from Isaiah 50:6 and the tradition of Jesus’s silence under suffering was derived from Isaiah 50:7. Crossan argues that allusions to this passion prophecy are very early and known to the *Cross Gospel*.⁷⁴³

There was an early Christian tradition that connected Isaiah 50:7 and 53:7 to the passion of Jesus, but the examples cited by Crossan do not

⁷⁴² Vaganay 1930, 194–195; Crossan 1988, 174–175.

⁷⁴³ Crossan 1988, 176–184.

demonstrate that a very early passion prophecy of silence under suffering once existed. In Acts 8:32–33 the silence is mentioned, but it is not explicitly connected to the silence of Jesus.⁷⁴⁴ This observation can lead to a more critical examination between the passion prophecies in Isaiah 53:7 and the tradition of silence under suffering. Acts 8:32–33 may refer to the suffering of Jesus without a connection to his silence under suffering. This possibility needs to be considered more carefully after examining the suggested passages of silence under suffering in 1 Peter 2:22–23 and Barnabas 5:2b. 1 Peter 2:22–25 has four explicit citations to Isaiah 53:4–9. If the refusal to revile and to threaten back implied silence under suffering, in this context a more probable allusion would be to Isaiah 53:7 rather than Isaiah 50:7. However, the author of 1 Peter clearly refers to other elements in Isaiah 53:4–9 and the completely different allusion in verse 2:23 is unlikely. Barnabas 5:2b demonstrates that Isaiah 53:5–7 was quoted in early Christianity as a prophecy of the passion of Jesus, but not as silence under suffering. In fact, the motif of silence was carefully omitted from the quotation. In the light of Barnabas 5:2b it is possible that Luke also quoted Isaiah 53:7b–8a as a passion prophecy of suffering, but not as silence under suffering. If there was an early tradition that connected silence under suffering from Isaiah 53:7 with the passion of Jesus, all the three above-mentioned sources managed to suppress this tradition.

Crossan himself admits that the “discussion of Isaiah 50:7, *Barnabas* 5:14b, *Sibylline Oracles* 8:288–93 and *Ode* 31:10–11 is all extremely hypothetical”.⁷⁴⁵ Crossan hesitates whether the silence in the *Sibylline Oracles* indicates a background in Isaiah 50:7.⁷⁴⁶ Similarly, it can be asked is “I have set my face as a solid rock” in Barnabas 5:14b a reference to the silence of Jesus? In the *Odes of Solomon* these two themes are both finally present, but the other elements of Isaiah 50:6–7 are not. Therefore, it is uncertain whether Isaiah 50:6 is in the background of this combination. Crossan concludes that at most the “answer is a very faint maybe.”⁷⁴⁷ The commentary on Luke 22:42–44 by Dionysius of Alexandria combined all four

⁷⁴⁴ Crossan 1988, 175.

⁷⁴⁵ Crossan 1988, 179.

⁷⁴⁶ Crossan 1988, 177.

⁷⁴⁷ Crossan 1988, 179.

elements of Isaiah 50:6–7 and the motif of silence. However, the text is from the third century and is too late to be included among witnesses to the pre-gospel exegetical treatment. It demonstrates that the silence under suffering had a background in Isaiah 50:7 only at a much later stage.

There is no evidence of an early tradition of silence under suffering in the early Christian sources. The Gospel of Peter does, however, contain a tradition of silence under suffering and it has a background in the passion prophecy. The striking, spitting and scourging of Isaiah 50:6 are included in the abuse (Gos. Pet. 3:9). Therefore, it is possible that Isaiah 50:7 is in the background of this tradition. However, the more explicit passion prophecy of silence under suffering from Isaiah 53:7 is a more plausible background for this tradition. One of the characteristic features of the passion narrative in the Gospel of Peter is a connection between the prophetic texts and the passion of Jesus.⁷⁴⁸ The author of the Gospel of Peter combined the scattered references to Isaiah 50:6 in the abuse of Jesus. He also placed the tradition of silence from the Jewish trial into the crucifixion to create a fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53:7. This is supported by the shared vocabulary. The Gospel of Peter does not share vocabulary with the passion prophecy in Isaiah 53:7 (or 50:7) or with the possible early Christian tradition of silence under suffering. However, it shares vocabulary with silence under interrogation in Mark and Matthew. The most plausible explanation of the vocabulary in the silence under suffering is that the author of the Gospel of Peter relocated the tradition of silence from the Jewish trial in Mark and Matthew to the crucifixion scene of his gospels.⁷⁴⁹ Therefore, the tradition of silence under suffering was included in the crucifixion scene to create an allusion to the fulfilment of prophecy.

King of Israel

In the Gospel of Peter the Jews place an inscription “This is the King of Israel” (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ) on the cross. In the canonical gospels an

⁷⁴⁸ See Denker 1975, 58–77.

⁷⁴⁹ Green 1987, 296–297.

inscription “King of the Jews” (ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων) appears with a few diverging details:⁷⁵⁰

Mark 15:26	ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων
Matt. 27:37	οὗτός ἐστιν Ἰησοῦς ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων
Luke 23:38	ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων οὗτος
John 19:19	Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων
Gos. Pet. 4:10	οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ

It has been observed several times that the proper name Jesus is not mentioned in the preserved fragment of the Gospel of Peter. The author’s preference is the title Lord, but occasionally the proper name Jesus has been replaced with a pronoun or omitted altogether. The cross inscription is yet another example of this tendency. When the author’s tendency to exclude the proper name Jesus is taken into consideration, the Matthean version of the inscription is nearly identical with the Gospel of Peter. The notable difference is that in the Gospel of Peter the title is king of Israel, but Matthew has the king of the Jews. This difference separates the Gospel of Peter from all the canonical gospels.⁷⁵¹ It was noted earlier that in the mockery and abuse scene, which precedes the crucifixion, the Jews mock Jesus as the king of Israel, while in the canonical gospels the Roman soldiers mock Jesus as the king of the Jews.⁷⁵²

Crossan has observed that Mark mentions the king of the Jews five times in his passion narrative (Mark 15:2, 15:9, 15:12, 15:18, 15:26) and the king of Israel only once (Mark 15:32). In the latter, the high priests and scribes mock Jesus on the cross. The title king of the Jews appears in the Roman trial, in the mockery of the Roman soldiers and in the inscription that the Romans placed on the cross. In other words, Mark considered that the title king of the Jews was an appropriate accusation before the Romans while only the Jewish leaders accuse Jesus as the king of Israel.⁷⁵³ Matthew preserved this distinction between Roman and Jewish accusation in the passion narrative. Pilate (Matt. 27:11), the Roman soldiers (Matt. 27:29) and the

⁷⁵⁰ Foster 2010, 295–296. None of the gospels share vocabulary in the description of the manner in which the inscription was placed on the cross.

⁷⁵¹ Foster 2010, 297; Augustin 2014, 181.

⁷⁵² See above chapter 5.2.

⁷⁵³ Crossan 1988, 59–60.

Roman inscription on the cross (Matt. 27:37) refer to Jesus as the king of the Jews, while the high priests, scribes and elders mock him as the king of Israel (Matt. 27:42). Matthew changed two of Mark's references to the king of the Jews to Jesus who is said to be the Christ (Matt. 27:17, 27:22), but the distinction between king of the Jews on the lips of the Romans and the king of Israel on the lips of the Jews is consistently preserved.⁷⁵⁴ Crossan emphasizes that in the Gospel of Peter both the mockery and the crucifixion are carried out by the Jewish people. Therefore, the title is on both occasions the king of Israel, which is a Jewish designation. The author of the Gospel of Peter used the same distinction between the Jewish accusation king of Israel and the Roman accusation king of the Jews as did the canonical gospels. The difference in the cross inscription and the abuse scene can be explained through the difference of Roman soldiers and Jewish people as the crucifiers of Jesus.⁷⁵⁵

Crossan argues that in the early *Cross Gospel* the Jews accused Jesus for calling himself as the king of Israel. In the *Cross Gospel* only the Jews condemn Jesus to be crucified and carry out the crucifixion. Therefore, only the title king of Israel appears in the Gospel of Peter. However, in Mark Pilate sentences Jesus to death and the Roman soldiers carry out the execution. Mark did not consider the title king of Israel to be an appropriate accusation before the Romans. He rephrased the king of Israel to the more appropriate king of the Jews in all instances where the Romans are involved. The title king of Israel is still preserved in the mockery of the high priests and the scribes.⁷⁵⁶

Crossan's analysis of the accusation king of the Jews/Israel is accurate, but the direction of dependence can be reversed. Neirynck emphasizes that the Gospel of Peter has a markedly anti-Jewish tendency. In the trial Pilate withdraws and King Herod pronounces the sentence. The author of the Gospel of Peter has replaced the Roman soldiers with the Jewish people in the passion narrative. The Jewish people mock, abuse and crucify

⁷⁵⁴ Luke and John do not have the title king of Israel in the passion narrative. The king of the Jews appears consistently as a Roman designation. In Luke the Roman soldiers mock Jesus at cross and call him the king of the Jews.

⁷⁵⁵ Crossan 1988, 56–60.

⁷⁵⁶ Crossan 1988, 59–60.

Jesus. In other words, they carry out all the actions of the Roman soldiers in the canonical gospels. The author of the Gospel of Peter replaced the Roman soldiers with the Jewish people and at the same time replaced the Roman accusation king of the Jews with the Jewish accusation king of Israel.⁷⁵⁷

The Penitent Thief and the Legs Unbroken

Verses 4:13–4:14 of the Gospel of Peter form a unit. In verse 4:13 the penitent thief rebukes the Jews for crucifying an innocent man and confesses Jesus as the saviour of men. Verse 4:14 describes the reaction of the crucifiers. They become enraged and decide not break his bones so that he may die in agony. In the canonical gospels the penitent thief is mentioned in Luke 23:39–43 and the non-breaking of Jesus’s legs in John 19:31–33. The Gospel of Peter also shares vocabulary with Luke and John in the crucifixion scene.

In Luke 23:39 the penitent thief narrative begins with a typical Lucan formulation Εἷς δὲ τῶν κρεμασθέντων κακούργων. In the Gospel of Peter 4:10 the rebuke of the penitent thief begins with similar phrasing Εἷς δὲ τις τῶν κακούργων ἐκείνων.⁷⁵⁸ In addition to the typical Lucan style Εἷς δὲ τις τῶν, the Gospel of Peter shares the term κακούργων with Luke 23:29, while λησταί appears in the parallel narrative of Mark 15:27 and Matthew 27:38, and ἄλλους δύο in John 19:18.⁷⁵⁹ Although both narratives begin with similar phrasing, it needs to be observed that in Luke the other thief reviles (ἐβλασφήμει) Jesus, while in the Gospel of Peter the penitent thief rebukes (ὠνειδισεν) the Jews.⁷⁶⁰ The verb ὠνειδίζω appears in the parallel scene in Mark 15:32 and Matthew 27:44 where the crucified men both reviled (ὠνειδίζον) Jesus. Kirk argues that the author of the Gospel of Peter preferred Markan and Matthean vocabulary to Lucan vocabulary.⁷⁶¹ Although the same verb appears in the parallel scenes, the significance of a single shared word is questionable. This is rendered slightly more problematic by the change in the verb tense and in the person who is speaking. The dependence of the Gospel of

⁷⁵⁷ Neiryneck 1989, 156–157. See also Augustin 2014, 181.

⁷⁵⁸ Green 1987, 296–297; Foster 2010, 302.

⁷⁵⁹ Green 1987, 296–297; Crossan 1988, 166–169; Foster 2010, 288–289.

⁷⁶⁰ Foster 2010, 302.

⁷⁶¹ Kirk 1994, 576.

Peter on Mark and Matthew in this instance requires that one has accepted the literary dependence of the former on the latter and that the author of the Gospel of Peter combines the vocabulary of the canonical gospels on the basis of the entire evidence. After the verb ὀνειδίζω the Gospel of Peter again shares vocabulary with Luke. In Luke the revilings of the other thief is phrased αὐτὸν λέγων. In Mark and Matthew it is simply αὐτόν. The Gospel of Peter shares the participle form with Luke αὐτοὺς λέγων. The change from a single to a plural is required by the change of address from Jesus to the Jews.

Εἷς δὲ τις τῶν	εἷς δὲ τῶν
κακούργων ἐκείνων	κρεμασθέντων κακούργων (Luke 23:39a)
ὀνειδισεν	ὀνειδιζον (Mark 15:32b, Matt. 27:44)
αὐτοὺς λέγων	αὐτόν λέγων (Luke 23:39a)

The rest of verse 4:13 does not share vocabulary with Luke. This is the result of the changes in the narrative outline. In Luke the penitent thief rebukes the other thief, while in the Gospel of Peter he rebukes the Jewish crucifiers. As the narrative content changes, the shared vocabulary is naturally lost as well. Only the contradiction between just and unjust suffering is upheld in both versions of the rebuke of the penitent thief. This is expressed by the pair ἡμεῖς – οὗτος δὲ in both gospels.⁷⁶²

Crossan has placed great emphasis on the crucifixion scene: “The account of the two thieves is the first place where, I would claim, the direction of influence is clearly from *Cross Gospel* to intracanonial Gospels and not vice versa.”⁷⁶³ The priority of the canonical gospels requires that the author of the Gospel of Peter dismembered Luke’s beautifully crafted story of the two thieves and reduced it to the shorter version in the Gospel of Peter. Crossan writes that he cannot see any reason for such redaction. Therefore, according to Crossan the alternative theory explains the evidence. He argues that Luke took the rebuke of the thief from Mark 15:32b, developed the rebuke of the

⁷⁶² Crossan 1988, 171.

⁷⁶³ Crossan 1988, 173.

penitent thief from *Cross Gospel* (Gos. Pet. 4:13) and created Jesus's response to the penitent thief.⁷⁶⁴

It has to be conceded that the Lucan version of the narrative of the penitent thief is more elaborate. It is plausible to argue that the more extensive narrative in Luke 23:39–43 was created on the basis of the shorter description of the penitent thief in the Gospel of Peter 4:13. However, the Gospel of Peter contains a redactional feature, which indicates that the author of the Gospel of Peter did in fact “dismember” the Lucan narrative. Brown argues that the Gospel of Peter has an anti-Jewish tendency. In the Gospel of Peter the Jewish people crucify Jesus. The rebuke of the penitent thief is not directed to the other thief, but to the Jews. This change is part of the author's redaction, which attempts to highlight the guilt of the Jews and explains why the narrative has been rewritten.⁷⁶⁵ Moreover, in Luke the penitent thief refers to Jesus as this man, but in the Gospel of Peter he confesses Jesus as the saviour of men. The higher Christology of the Gospel of Peter also supports the priority of Luke.⁷⁶⁶

In the Gospel of Peter the rebuke and confession of the penitent thief leads to a reaction of the crucifiers. The Jews become enraged and decide not to break his legs so that he might die in torment (Gos. Pet. 4:14). The breaking of the legs of a crucified person, although excruciatingly painful, was a common custom to hasten the death through suffocation and hence alleviate the suffering of the crucified. The Gospel of Peter is witness to this practice.⁷⁶⁷ In the Gospel of Peter it is not entirely clear whose legs are not broken. In terms of grammar, the pronoun “him” could refer to either the penitent thief or to Jesus.⁷⁶⁸ The narrative seems to indicate that it is the penitent thief

⁷⁶⁴ Crossan 1988, 171–174.

⁷⁶⁵ Brown 1987, 328.

⁷⁶⁶ Foster 2010, 304 argues that Saviour of men σωτήρ γενόμενος is developed from the taunt σῶσον σεαυτὸν καὶ ἡμᾶς in Luke 23:39. Foster supports this conclusion by the free rewriting of the penitent thief tradition. This interpretation seems unnecessary to explain the title in verse 4:13. Franz Weißengruber examined the optative form ἀποθάνοι in Gos. Pet. This optative form is important to the question of the date of composition of the Gospel of Peter. In the classical period optative was used in final clause, but in koine – including the the New Testament – subjunctive replaced optative in the final clause. In the second century the use of optative was revived. Weißengruber argues that the optative form in the final clause in verse 4:14 supports the conclusion that the Gospel of Peter was written in the second century. (Weißengruber 1978a, 117–120). See also Kraus 2007, 66–67; Porter 2007, 78. For a grammatical analysis of the Gospel of Peter see Weißengruber 1978b, 121–144.

⁷⁶⁷ Crossan 1988, 163–164.

⁷⁶⁸ Augustin 2014, 188–189.

whose legs are not broken. The crucifiers react to the words of the penitent thief and he is the last person mentioned in the narrative.⁷⁶⁹

As was noted above, in the canonical gospels only John mentions the breaking of the legs of the crucified. The narrative, however, is very different from the Gospel of Peter. In John the Jewish leaders request from Pilate that the legs of the crucified men be broken and their bodies taken down before sunset. Pilate accepts their request and the soldiers break the legs of the two others who were crucified with Jesus. The soldiers do not break the legs of Jesus, because they realize that he had already died (John 19:31–33). In John the breaking of the legs is done to hasten the death.⁷⁷⁰ In John the observance of the Law is the motive for the breaking of the legs and the alleviation of suffering is not mentioned, although it would have been the outcome of the action.⁷⁷¹

In verse 19:36 John explicates the fulfilment of the scripture that “not a bone of him shall be broken” (Ὅστουν οὐ συντριβήσεται αὐτοῦ). In Exodus 12:10 and 12:46 it is written, “you shall not break a bone of it” (Ὅστουν οὐ συντρίψετε ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ) concerning the paschal lamb. In Numbers 9:12 “they shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break a bone of it” (Ὅστουν οὐ συντρίψουσιν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ). In Psalm 33:19–20 the righteous is promised that the Lord will deliver him and that “He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken” (κύριος φυλάσσει πάντα τὰ ὀστέα αὐτῶν). Crossan notes that the quotation in John does not exactly agree with either the prophecy of the Paschal lamb or the persecuted righteous one. The noun “bone” is in the singular as in the Paschal lamb texts, while the verb “broken” is in the passive form as in the psalm text. Crossan correctly concludes that in John’s theology the Paschal lamb has such a central place that the quotation is primarily focused on it rather than the psalm text.⁷⁷²

Crossan argues that it is not credible that the author of the Gospel of Peter transferred the non-breaking of the legs of Jesus to the penitent thief. A more plausible explanation for the parallels is that John utilized the

⁷⁶⁹ Crossan 1988, 167–168.

⁷⁷⁰ Kirk 1994, 578–579.

⁷⁷¹ Foster 2010, 306–307.

⁷⁷² Crossan 1988, 168–169.

ambiguous phrase in the *Cross Gospel* and transferred the motif to refer explicitly to Jesus.⁷⁷³ John's motive was to create a fulfilment of the prophecy. The alternative that the magnificent tableau in John 19:31–33, 36 was reduced to the non-breaking of the thief legs is simply inexplicable.⁷⁷⁴

Critics of Crossan's theory have argued that the Gospel of Peter also describes that the legs of Jesus were not broken. They recognize that the verse Gos. Pet. 4:14 is ambiguous, but claim that the author of the Gospel of Peter intended that Jesus's legs were not broken.⁷⁷⁵ Kirk has offered the most extensive argumentation in support of this position. He argues that the ambiguous phrase should be interpreted in the light of the larger context. Kirk points out that the narrative that precedes verse 4:14 consistently highlights the suffering and mockery of Jesus (Gos. Pet. 3:6–4:12). The non-breaking of Jesus's legs is the final link in this chain and therefore does not refer to the penitent thief.⁷⁷⁶ Kirk also argues that the narrative, which follows the response of the Jews, indicates that the author of the Gospel of Peter intended that the legs of Jesus should not be broken. In the immediately following verse, darkness covers all of Judea and the Jews become anxious that the sun has set upon the crucified body and the law of the burial before sunset has been violated (Gos. Pet. 5:15). They respond to this problem by offering a poisonous drink to Jesus in order to hasten his death (Gos. Pet. 5:16).⁷⁷⁷ Kirk concludes that the necessity to hasten the death of Jesus demonstrates that Jesus's legs have not been broken earlier.⁷⁷⁸

Kirk's arguments are of a different kind. The narrative in the Gospel of Peter 3:6–4:12 focuses on the suffering and mockery of Jesus, but regardless of whether the legs of Jesus or the penitent thief are broken (Gos. Pet. 4:14), the rebuke and confession of the penitent thief (Gos. Pet. 4:13) interrupts the sequence of the torments inflicted on Jesus. Moreover, in the Gospel of Peter the desire to inflict suffering is not directed only at Jesus, but also at those who confess him. After the burial of Jesus, the disciples hide from the Jews (Gos. Pet. 7:26) and the women fear the Jews who are full of

⁷⁷³ Crossan 1985, 144.

⁷⁷⁴ Crossan 1988, 172–174.

⁷⁷⁵ Brown 1994, 1176, 1330; Kirk 1994, 579–580; Henderson 2011, 60–62.

⁷⁷⁶ Kirk 1994, 580.

⁷⁷⁷ See below chapter 5.4.

⁷⁷⁸ Kirk 1994, 580–581; see also McCant 1984, 264; Maras 2003, 55; Augustin 2014, 192.

wrath (Gos. Pet. 12:50). In the Gospel of Peter the rage against Jesus's followers is a characteristic of the Jews. The penitent thief makes essentially a Christian confession and therefore it is entirely plausible that in the Gospel of Peter the Jews wish to inflict suffering on him. The preceding narrative does not indicate that the legs of Jesus rather than those of the penitent thief were not broken.

Kirk's argument concerning the narrative which follows verse 4:14 is more noteworthy. The need to offer the poisonous drink specifically to Jesus implies that his legs, unlike the legs of the two malefactors, were not broken. At this point, it needs to be asked how consistent the Gospel of Peter is. Several inconsistencies in the narrative were observed above.⁷⁷⁹ An argument against the narrative's consistency is that the Jews are anxious to bury Jesus before sunset, but they do not offer any thought about the fate of the crucified malefactors and how their burial is related to the upholding of the law. It seems that the author of the Gospel of Peter is not concerned with the malefactors after the crucifixion and therefore the narrative that follows the crucifixion (Gos. Pet. 4:10–4:14) does not provide reliable evidence concerning the interpretation whose legs were not broken.

The following darkness causes anxiety among the crucifiers and they offer a poisonous drink to Jesus. These details support the interpretation that in the Gospel of Peter the legs of Jesus were not broken, but a more natural reading of verse 4:14 is that the legs of the penitent thief were not broken. In any case, the ambiguity of the verse remains and it may have been intentional. It can be concluded that in the light of the context both interpretations are possible. The interpretation that the legs of the penitent thief were not broken does not prove that the Gospel of Peter is not dependent on John.

It has been argued throughout this study that the anti-Jewish tendency controls the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. The non-breaking of the legs is part of this anti-Jewish redaction. In John the breaking of the legs is not intended to inflict suffering, but the Gospel of Peter presents

⁷⁷⁹ It is also worth noting that the Gospel of Peter does not explicitly say that the legs of the other two were broken. This may be implied in the decision of the Jews, but if the author intended to convey this meaning, he did not succeed in the best manner possible.

an opposite intention. Regardless of whether the legs of Jesus or the penitent thief are not broken, the act is explicitly designed to inflict further suffering. In other words, it is another act of violence against Jesus or a punishment for the criminal who sides with Jesus against the Jews. The anti-Jewish tendency explains why the author of the Gospel of Peter has replaced the Torah observance of the Jews with their malevolence. This description heightens the polemical description of Jews in the Gospel of Peter, which is one of the main concerns of the author.⁷⁸⁰

5.5. Death of Jesus (Gos. Pet. 5:15–6:22)

5:15 Ἦν δὲ μεσημβρία, καὶ σκότος κατέσχε πᾶσαν τὴν Ἰουδαίαν· καὶ θορυβοῦντο καὶ ἡγωνίων μήποτε ὁ ἥλιος ἔδυ ἐπειδὴ ἔτι ἔζη· γέγραπται γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἥλιον μὴ δύναι ἐπὶ πεφονευμένῳ. 5:16 Καὶ τις αὐτῶν εἶπεν· Ποτίσατε αὐτὸν χολὴν μετὰ ὄξους· καὶ κεράσαντες ἐπότισαν. 5:17 Καὶ ἐπλήρωσαν πάντα καὶ ἐτελείωσαν κατὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῶν τὰ ἁμαρτήματα. 5:18 Περιήρχοντο δὲ πολλοὶ μετὰ λύχνων νομίζοντες ὅτι νύξ ἐστίν καὶ ἐπέσαντο. 5:19 Καὶ ὁ Κύριος ἀνεβόησε λέγων· Ἡ δύναμις μου, ἡ δύναμις, κατέλειπός με· καὶ εἰπὼν ἀνελήφθη. 5:20 Καὶ αὐτῆς ὥρας διεράγη τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ εἰς δύο. 6:21 Καὶ τότε ἀπέσπασαν τοὺς ἥλους ἀπὸ τῶν χειρῶν τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ ἔθηκαν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς· καὶ ἡ γῆ πᾶσα ἐσεισθη καὶ φόβος μέγας ἐγένετο. 6:22 Τότε ἥλιος ἔλαμψε καὶ εὐρέθη ὥρα ἐνάτη.

5:15 It was midday and darkness covered all Judea. And they became anxious and disturbed that the sun had set, because he was still alive. For it is written for them: The sun should not set on one who has been murdered. 5:16 And one of them said: Give him gall with vinegar to drink. And they mixed it and gave it to him to drink. 5:17 And they fulfilled everything and filled the measure of their sins on their head. 5:18 And many went with lamps, because they believed that it was night and stumbled. 5:19 And the Lord cried out and said: My power, o power, you have forsaken me. And having said this he was taken up. 5:20 And at that hour the veil of the temple of Jerusalem was rent in two. 6:21 And then they drew the nails from the hands of the Lord and laid him on the ground. And the whole earth shook and there was great fear. 6:22 The sun shone and it was found to be the ninth hour.

⁷⁸⁰ Kirk 1994, 581–582; Henderson 2011, 60–62.

The Darkness Begins

In the Gospel of Peter darkness covers all of Judea at noon. It is presumed in the misconception of Jews that it was night (Gos. Pet. 5:18) and it ends as the sun appears again at the ninth hour (Gos. Pet. 6:22). The references to darkness frame the scene of Jesus's death (Gos. Pet. 5:15–6:22).⁷⁸¹ In the Gospel of Peter the darkness is connected to the burial before sunset. The Jews become anxious, because Jesus is still alive and their law demands that the sun should not set on one who has been murdered (Gos. Pet. 5:16). In the synoptic gospels the beginning of the darkness at the third hour and its end at the ninth hour are mentioned in one verse (Mark 15:33, Matt. 27:45, Luke 23:44).⁷⁸² The canonical gospels do not connect the darkness to the burial before sunset or to the observance of the law.⁷⁸³

The eschatological darkness is present in several Old Testament passages (Exod 10:22; Isa 13:9–10; Isa 50:3; Joel 2:1–2). However, the most significant passion prophecy behind the darkness in the synoptic gospels and the Gospel of Peter is Amos 8:9, “And on that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon (μεσημβρίας), and darken the earth at broad daylight.” The explicit reference to μεσημβρίας demonstrates that Amos 8:9 is the most important passion prophecy in the background of Gospel of Peter 5:15.⁷⁸⁴ In the synoptic gospels the darkness begins at the sixth hour (ὥρας ἑκτης), which corresponds to noon. The passion prophecy of Amos 8:9 is firmly established behind the synoptic passion narratives as well. However, the synoptic gospels do not share the term μεσημβρίας with Amos 8:9.

Crossan argues that Mark, followed by Matthew and Luke, compressed the description of the darkness into one verse. According to Crossan, the synoptic authors also muted the reference to darkness at noon (μεσημβρίας) and preferred the designation the sixth hour (ὥρας ἑκτης).⁷⁸⁵ The dependence of the Gospel of Peter on the canonical gospels provides a more plausible interpretation of the evidence. This is another instance when

⁷⁸¹ Crossan 1988, 198; Henderson 2011, 107.

⁷⁸² John does not include the tradition of darkness during the passion of Jesus.

⁷⁸³ Crossan 1988, 197, 207; Foster 2010, 311–314.

⁷⁸⁴ Crossan 1988, 198; see also Brown 1995, 1037; Foster 2010, 313; Henderson 2011, 108.

⁷⁸⁵ Crossan 1988, 200.

Crossan presumes that Mark did understand the allusion to the passion prophecy and did something unusual with his source. The argument that Mark would not have recognized the allusions to a passion prophecy is questionable itself, but it is especially problematic to argue that Matthew preferred Mark to the *Cross Gospel*. Matthew improved Mark's passion narrative on various occasions to create a new or a closer fulfilment of the passion prophecies. If Matthew knew the more explicit reference to darkness at noon (μεσημβρίας) from the *Cross Gospel*, why did he omit it and instead decided to follow the more awkward version of Mark? The same argument applies to Luke as well, although there are examples where Luke omitted Mark's allusions to prophetic texts. The opposite direction of dependence explains the redaction of the evangelists without such difficulties. The author of the Gospel of Peter brought the passion tradition into a closer correspondence with the passion prophecy by using the vocabulary of Amos 8:9. The use of vocabulary from the passion prophecy is also a typical feature of the Gospel of Peter and its presence here can be explained as the author's redaction of his sources. The synoptic gospels contain a more difficult reading and in the light of this criterion the Gospel of Peter represents a later and more developed form of the tradition.

The author of the Gospel of Peter knew the synoptic tradition that the darkness lasted from the sixth to the ninth hour, but elaborated the brief comment into explicit references to the beginning and to the end of the darkness, references which frame the scene of Jesus's death. A similar framing of scenes in the Gospel of Peter appears in the scenes of the abuse (Gos. Pet. 3:6–3:9) and crucifixion (Gos. Pet. 4:10–4:14). This demonstrates that the framing of the scenes in the passion narrative was a redactional feature of the author of the Gospel of Peter. It is very unlikely that all four authors of the canonical gospels would have omitted this feature of their source on every occasion. The alternative that the author of the Gospel of Peter created these frames and inserted them into the framework of Mark's and Matthew's passion narrative avoids the problems involved in the redaction of the gospels.

The author of the Gospel of Peter also connected the darkness to the burial before sunset and the observance of the law. The Jews become

anxious that the commandment to bury a murdered man before sunset has been violated. The author of the Gospel of Peter has inserted a comment that it is written for them (γέγραπται αὐτοῖς). The commandment and presumably in a more or less extensive sense the law as a whole applies to the Jews, but not to the author's Christian community. The quotation of Scriptures does not correspond to any passage in the Old Testament, but the commandment alludes to Deuteronomy 21:22–23. “And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you shall hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon a tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is accursed by God; you shall not defile the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance.”⁷⁸⁶ In the narrative context of the Gospel of Peter the hanging on a tree obviously refers to crucifixion.⁷⁸⁷ The same commandment was quoted earlier by Herod (Gos. Pet. 2:5). In the discussion of the burial in the Gospel of Peter I argued that Jesus was buried by his friends and the reference to Deuteronomy 21:22–23 does not reflect an early tradition of burial by enemies. The purpose of the quotation is not to describe the burial of Jesus, but rather the sins of the Jews. This is apparent in the changes the author of the Gospel of Peter makes to the Old Testament text, which he is quoting.

Henderson has argued that the author of the Gospel of Peter changed the original meaning of the quotation. In Deuteronomy 21:22–23 the context unambiguously demonstrates that a lawful execution is intended. The described situation is that of a court setting as is shown by the introduction when someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death (Ἐὰν δὲ γένηται ἐν τινι ἁμαρτία κρίμα θανάτου). In the Gospel of Peter the verb φονεύω refers to an unlawful killing or murder. The most explicit examples of this are both versions of the Decalogue (Exod 20:15; Deut 5:18). In the New Testament the verb φονεύω is consistently used as a reference to murder. There is no reason to interpret it differently in the context of the Gospel of Peter. Therefore, the Gospel of Peter indirectly describes the Jews as guilty of the murder of the Lord. Henderson is cautious whether the author of the Gospel of Peter knew

⁷⁸⁶ Foster 2010, 314.

⁷⁸⁷ Crossan 1988, 200–206 has demonstrated that this text was applied to crucifixion in pre-Christian Judaism.

that he depicted the Jews as murderers.⁷⁸⁸ In the light of his anti-Jewish tendency and insights into the Scriptures, it is very likely that this verse represents the author's deliberate redaction.

Vaganay notes that in the Gospel of Peter darkness does not cover the whole earth, but the whole of Judea, which indicates that the judgement has fallen on the people of Judea.⁷⁸⁹ The Old Testament background of the darkness provides the understanding of the darkness as a sign of judgement. These prophetic texts demonstrate that the darkness at noon symbolizes divine wrath. Henderson also argues that the darkness is first of the three signs of judgement against the Jews.⁷⁹⁰ According to Henderson, the Jews recognize the meaning of the darkness and respond to it with fear.⁷⁹¹ I agree with Henderson that the darkness is used in the Gospel of Peter as one of the signs of judgement against the Jews, but I disagree with him on the question that the Jews in the Gospel of Peter clearly understood its meaning. Foster observes that in the narrative of the Gospel of Peter the Jews become anxious because they fear that the sun has set while he is still alive on the cross and thus break the commandment to bury who has been crucified before sunset.⁷⁹² On the narrative level there is no indication that the Jews fear the darkness, because it signals the divine wrath. This interpretation is supported by their reaction to the darkness. They respond to it by offering a poisonous drink to Jesus in order to hasten his death (Gos. Pet. 5:16). The Jews do not realize their sins and the sign of judgement they have received. Instead, they continue to commit acts of violence against the Son of God. On another level the darkness has a strong background in the Scriptures where it is connected with eschatological judgement. In the Gospel of Peter the Jews commit various sins against the Son of God and do not realize what the Scriptures have foretold. The author of the Gospel of Peter plays with the two levels of the text. The Jews are afraid that they have violated a commandment of their law without realizing that the divine judgement has fallen upon them. In the Gospel of

⁷⁸⁸ Henderson 2011, 67–69.

⁷⁸⁹ Vaganay 1930, 249.

⁷⁹⁰ The other two are the torn veil of the Jerusalem temple (Gos. Pet. 5:20) and the earthquake (Gos. Pet. 6:21). Henderson 2011, 107 includes these among the signs mentioned in verse 8:28 (ταῦτα τὰ μέγιστα σημεῖα). Henderson also mentions the destruction of Jerusalem (Gos. Pet. 7:25). It has to be asked how does the future destruction of Jerusalem belong among the “mighty signs that have come to pass”?

⁷⁹¹ Henderson 2011, 73–74, 107–108.

⁷⁹² Foster 2010, 313.

Peter the darkness fulfils the passion prophecy of Amos 8:9 and alludes to the divine judgement of the crucifiers. The Jews do not realize the meaning of the events and continue to act against the Son of God by offering a poisonous drink to him.

Gall and Vinegar

In the Gospel of Peter the Jews respond to the darkness and the anxiety of breaking the commandment in Deuteronomy 21:22–23 by offering Jesus a drink of gall mixed with vinegar (ξολήν μετὰ ὄξους). The tradition is firmly anchored in the passion prophecy. Psalm 68:22 reads “They gave me poison for food (ξολήν) and for my thirst vinegar (ὄξος).” All four canonical gospels include a tradition of a drink offered to Jesus during the crucifixion and Psalm 68:22 is in the background of all four passion narratives. However, the canonical gospels disagree on the number, context, content and intention of the drink.⁷⁹³ Therefore, each evangelists’ treatment and interpretation of the tradition needs to be discussed individually before comparing of the different version and discussing the earliest form of the tradition.

In Mark two separate drinks are offered to Jesus. The Roman soldiers offer the first drink, wine mixed with myrrh (οἶνον ἐσμυρνισμένον), before the crucifixion, but Jesus refuses to drink it (Mark 15:23). It is unlikely that Psalm 68:22 is in the background of this tradition. The only shared vocabulary is the common verb δίδωμι and Mark uses a different form than the Septuagint.⁷⁹⁴ The immediate context of the first drink in Mark does not reflect fulfilment of passion prophecy, but is a straightforward, even laconic, description of the crucifixion: Jesus is taken to Golgotha, he is offered wine mixed with myrrh and crucified (Mark 15:22–24).⁷⁹⁵ The first offered drink seems to have been given to numb the pain of crucifixion and thus ease the efforts of the crucifiers. A similar practice is known from Proverbs and later Jewish texts. Against this background Brown, interprets that Mark intended

⁷⁹³ Crossan 1988, 212.

⁷⁹⁴ Crossan 1988, 213. The other shared word is even less significant καί.

⁷⁹⁵ Brown 1987, 327 n. 35.

the drink as one of the temptations during the passion and Jesus's refusal to accept the drink as a sign of commitment to the will of the Father.⁷⁹⁶

In Mark the allusion to Psalm 68:22 is found only in the second drink.⁷⁹⁷ The allusion to the passion prophecy is apparent in the second drink in Mark's passion narrative. Jesus receives vinegar (ὄξος) on the cross (Mark 15:36). This forms an allusion to Psalm 68:22, which also mentions vinegar (ὄξος). Mark 15:36 and Psalm 68:22 also share the verb ποτίζω, although the former uses the imperfect tense ἐπότιζεν and the latter the aorist tense ἐπότισαν.⁷⁹⁸ The latter drink is closely connected to Jesus's cry of dereliction on the cross ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι.⁷⁹⁹ After the cry of dereliction, some of the bystanders say that he calls for Elijah and one of them runs to dip a sponge in vinegar and offers it to Jesus. The action is followed by a comment: Let us see if Elijah comes to take him down (Mark 15:34–36). In Mark the purpose of the drink is unclear. Mark probably understood the drink as an attempt to prolong Jesus's life.⁸⁰⁰ It is puzzling how vinegar could have such an effect.

Matthew's treatment of Mark is important for the analysis of the development of the tradition. In the first gospel two drinks are mentioned in the same contexts as in Mark, one before the crucifixion (Matt. 27:34) and another right before Jesus's death (Matt. 27:48). Matthew connected the first drink more closely to the passion prophecy than Mark. He replaced the mixture of wine with myrrh with wine mixed with gall (χολή). This created an allusion to the first part of the parallelism in Psalm 68:22 (χολή). Therefore, in Matthew the first drink is an allusion to the first part of the Psalm 68:22. It is a typical feature of Matthew's redaction to create two separate incidents of parallel expressions of one of the Old Testament prophecies.⁸⁰¹ Matthew has also changed Mark's imperfect tense ἐδίδουν to match the aorist tense ἔδωκαν of Psalm 68:22.⁸⁰² Matthew's redaction of Mark creates an allusion to Psalm

⁷⁹⁶ Brown 1994, 941–942.

⁷⁹⁷ Brown 1994, 942; Koester 1990, 229.

⁷⁹⁸ Crossan 1988, 213.

⁷⁹⁹ A similar scream is also narrated in the Gospel of Peter 5:19, but it follows, not precedes the drink of vinegar.

⁸⁰⁰ Crossan 1988, 213.

⁸⁰¹ Brown 1994, 942–943.

⁸⁰² Crossan 1988, 214.

68:22 in the first drink. In Matthew the intention to alleviate pain has receded into the background and the fulfilment of the passion prophecy becomes the central aspect of the first drink. In Matthew Jesus tastes the drink, but after tasting the wine mixed with gall refuses to drink it. The intention of the drink is not to numb the senses or to act as a test of commitment, but to allude to the suffering of the righteous at the hands of his enemies. In this regard Matthew is also closer to the meaning of Psalm 68:22.⁸⁰³

In the description of the second drink Matthew makes subtle, but nevertheless significant changes to his Markan source. The second drink is offered after Jesus's cry "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Some of the bystanders note that he calls for Elijah and one of them dips a sponge in vinegar and offers it to Jesus with a stick (Matt. 27:46–48). Matthew changed Mark's narrative by having others say that let us see if Elijah comes to take him down (Matt. 27:49). This also changed the purpose of the drink. In Matthew it is designed to hasten the death of Jesus.⁸⁰⁴ Matthew's redaction removes the problem that vinegar is intended to prolong Jesus's life. At the same time, Matthew brings the second drink closer to the original meaning of Psalm 68:22, because both suggest a poisonous drink.

Luke omitted Mark's first drink and the account of the second drink has been thoroughly redacted. The Roman soldiers offer vinegar (ὄξος) to the crucified Jesus. Before the drink is offered the soldiers mock him and after the drink they challenge the king of the Jews to save himself. (Luke 23:36–37). In Luke the cry of Jesus on the cross is omitted and the drink is not immediately connected to his death.⁸⁰⁵

In the fourth gospel there is only one drink, but John has elaborated the tradition in the light of the Scriptures. According to John, Jesus knew that everything has been accomplished and in order to fulfil the Scripture in everything Jesus said: "I am thirsty" (διψῶ). The soldiers offered him vinegar (ὄξος). In contrast to the synoptic gospels John mentions explicitly that Jesus drank the offered wine (John 19:28–30). John shares with Psalm 68:22 the expression thirst (δίψαν). The explicit reference to

⁸⁰³ Brown 1994, 943.

⁸⁰⁴ Crossan 1988, 214.

⁸⁰⁵ Crossan 1988, 214–215.

Scriptures indicates that this shared vocabulary is intentional.⁸⁰⁶ The fulfilment of the Scriptures governs John's version and it is difficult to determine if John intended the drink to hasten or prolong the death of Jesus, which follows immediately after it.

In the Gospel of Peter the Jews offer a drink to the crucified Jesus (Gos. Pet. 5:16). The content of the drink is gall mixed with vinegar (χολήν μετὰ ὄξους). In the Gospel of Peter the drink is intended to hasten the death of Jesus. The darkness has covered all of Judea and the crucifiers are anxious that the sun had set while he was still alive. In the narrative logic of the Gospel of Peter the drink is an attempt by the Jews to correct the situation by offering Jesus gall mixed with vinegar. After the drink the author of the Gospel of Peter inserts a comment that they fulfilled the measure of their sins. Therefore, the drink is their final act against the Lord before he dies. Within the context of the Gospel of Peter the drink is designed to poison Jesus.⁸⁰⁷

The gall and vinegar tradition is one of the examples Koester has cited as evidence of the priority of the Gospel of Peter. He argues that the Gospel of Peter preserves an earlier form of the tradition than the canonical gospels, because in the apocryphon the Old Testament prophetic text has not been used in several scenes as in the canonical gospels. In Mark and Matthew Jesus is offered two separate drinks during the crucifixion.⁸⁰⁸ Green has demonstrated a weakness in Koester's argument. Luke is dependent on Mark, but in Luke only one drink is offered during the crucifixion.⁸⁰⁹ Also in John only one drink is mentioned. The comparison of the canonical gospels shows that the tradition developed from two drinks into one, not in the reverse order. In the light of this evidence the Gospel of Peter represents a later form of the tradition.

The comparison of the gospels demonstrates that one drink containing both gall and vinegar represents a later form of the tradition. The redaction of the evangelist and the trajectory of the tradition both support this conclusion. The priority of the Gospel of Peter leads to many problematic

⁸⁰⁶ Crossan 1988, 215–216.

⁸⁰⁷ Crossan 1988, 212. See also Nicklas 2000, 218; Mara 2003, 55; Hartenstein 2007, 172, 175; Augustin 2014, 189, 192, 196. The tradition of gall and vinegar also appears in the Acts of John (Czachesz 2007, 246).

⁸⁰⁸ Koester 1980, 126–128; Koester 1990, 227, 230.

⁸⁰⁹ Green 1987, 296.

solutions in the redaction of the evangelists. The most inexplicable of them is the proposed redaction by Mark which Crossan admits to have been “quite unusual”.⁸¹⁰ Crossan claims that Mark did not recognize the allusion to Psalm 68:22 and divided the drink of gall and vinegar into two separate drinks which frame the crucifixion scene.⁸¹¹ Crossan does not present the reasons for Mark’s redaction. He simply proposes that Mark effectively did away with the first element of Psalm 68:22 by changing the gall into a mixture of myrrh and wine and placing it before the crucifixion. In the second element of Psalm 68:22 Mark preserved the vinegar and the vocabulary of the Psalm. This redaction of completely omitting the allusions to the passion prophecy in the first drink and preserving them in the second without any argument to support it seems like special pleading. Another problem is the purpose of both drinks in Mark. In the Gospel of Peter the gall and vinegar is designed to hasten the death of Jesus, but Mark uses the vinegar to prolong Jesus’s life. This created the above-mentioned problem of how vinegar postpones the death of Jesus.

Matthew’s redaction is least problematic for Crossan’s thesis. It was shown above that Matthew improved his Markan source by connecting the first drink to Psalm 68:22 and by strengthening the connection to the second drink. He also changed the drink of vinegar from the problematic death postponing purpose to the a logical death hastening intention. Matthew’s redaction can be interpreted as a combination of Mark and the Gospel of Peter, but it can just as well be explained through Matthew’s redaction of Mark. Luke omitted the first drink and placed the second drink in the middle of the Roman mockery at the cross. He retained the reference to vinegar, but changed the verb of the Psalm 68:22 and does not mention gall. If Luke knew the form of the tradition that is preserved in Gospel of Peter, why did he omit the reference to gall and the vocabulary of the Psalm 68:22? Luke’s change of the verb indicates that he did not necessarily understand the reference to the passion prophecy. Luke’s redaction of Mark is puzzling in this instance, but it is more difficult to explain if he knew the *Cross Gospel* as well. The redactional changes are more easily explained if Luke is only dependent on Mark. The hypothetical redaction of John is also problematic in Crossan’s

⁸¹⁰ Crossan 1988, 213.

⁸¹¹ Crossan 1988, 213.

theory. Crossan's theory presupposes that John knew from the *Cross Gospel* the tradition of a drink composed of gall and vinegar. The explicit reference to the Scriptures and the use of common vocabulary show that John was well aware of the background of the tradition in Psalm 68:22. Nevertheless he does not mention gall in his gospel. It is more likely that John did not know this version of the tradition.

Brown is correct in concluding that Crossan's theory requires redactional changes that are very unlikely.⁸¹² The opposite direction of dependence creates far fewer problems in the transmission of the tradition. The dependence of the Gospel of Peter on the canonical gospels and the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter explain the existence of the different version. Matthew established an allusion between the first drink and Psalm 68:22 and connected the second drink more closely to the same passion prophecy. Luke omitted the first drink and John mentioned only one drink. In the Gospel of Peter one drink includes both gall and vinegar. The author of the Gospel of Peter took the number of drinks from Luke and John and the content of the drink from Matthew. An example of this kind of an arrangement of the passion prophecies can be seen in the treatment of Isaiah 50:6 in the Gospel of Peter 3:9. The gall and vinegar fulfilled the passion prophecy of Psalm 68:22 and at the same time the Jews commit one more sin against the Son of God. Therefore, verse 5:16 is a creation of the author of the Gospel of Peter. It combines various elements of the canonical gospels and fulfils several objectives of the author. The elements of gall and vinegar as well as the vocabulary and purpose of the drink were taken from Matthew, who had previously established the closest connection with Psalm 68:22. The author of the Gospel of Peter drew the tradition of one drink from Luke and John. John mentioned explicitly that Jesus drank what was offered to him. The main contribution of the author of the Gospel of Peter was to place the action of offering drink on the Jews.

⁸¹² Brown 1994, 944.

They fulfilled everything

Verse 5:17 is important for the anti-Judaist interpretation of the Gospel of Peter. After the afflictions of Jesus, the author of the Gospel of Peter inserted a comment that “they fulfilled everything and they filled the measure of their sins upon their head” (ἐπλήρωσαν πάντα καὶ ἐτελείωσαν κατὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῶν τὰ ἁμαρτήματα). The canonical gospels do not have a parallel to this verse.⁸¹³ The statement is not part of the narrative, but a part of the author’s redaction and represents his interpretation of the preceding events. Therefore, the comment represents the author’s own interpretation of Jesus’s death and bears significant weight on the question of his intentions. Foster notes that the passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter has been closely intertwined with the passion prophecies and in verse 5:17 the author concludes that the preceding events have fulfilled the Scriptures.⁸¹⁴ The analysis of the preceding passion narrative (Gos. Pet. 1:1–5:16) has demonstrated that the author of the Gospel of Peter emphasized the fulfilment of the passion prophecy and the guilt of the Jews. In verse 5:17 both these elements are highlighted. In the Gospel of Peter the emphasis is different from the canonical gospels. The author emphasized that the Jews fulfilled everything that the Scriptures foretold of the passion of the Lord.⁸¹⁵ In the Gospel of Peter the Jewish people are responsible for inflicting the sufferings of Jesus. The author of the Gospel of Peter considered that the passion of Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures, but he also emphasized that the Jews carried out what the Scriptures foretold. In doing so, they filled the measure of their sins. According to the author of the Gospel of Peter, the Scriptures testify to the sins of the Jewish people. An intriguing parallel in First Thessalonians was discussed above. Paul wrote that the Jews have killed the Lord (τῶν Ἰουδαίων, τῶν καὶ τὸν κύριον ἀποκτεινάντων Ἰησοῦν) and fill up the measure of their sins (εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας πάντοτε). Paul also wrote, “God’s wrath has come upon them at last” (ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος), which finds some resemblance in the judgement and

⁸¹³ Henderson 2011, 55.

⁸¹⁴ Foster 2010, 319.

⁸¹⁵ Kirk 1994, 581 n. 62; Mara 2003, 55; Henderson 2011, 74.

end of Jerusalem in the Gospel of Peter 7:25.⁸¹⁶ The evidence is too meagre to demonstrate a direct dependence on 1 Thessalonians, but the Gospel of Peter certainly shares the main thrust of the passage in 1 Thess. 2:13–16.

They stumbled

After the Jews have carried out their actions against the Lord and fulfilled the measure of their sins, the darkness continues and they presume that it is night. They walk with lamps and stumble (Gos. Pet. 5:18). There is no parallel to this tradition in the canonical gospels.⁸¹⁷ There are minor parallels to verse 5:18 in the extra-canonical tradition. The three hours of darkness is called night in the Sibylline Oracles 8:305–6 and 1:375 and in Didascalia Apostolorum 5.14:10. The lamps are mentioned in the Anophora Pilate B,7. Crossan cited these texts as evidence to support the argument that the term “night” is presumably traditional and “there is also a faint possibility” that the lamps was a traditional motif as well.⁸¹⁸ The cited evidence is too sparse and too late to offer convincing support for Crossan’s argument. The description of the three-hour darkness as night and the lamps are later elaborations of the tradition, which underline the presence, and length of the darkness. They also prepare for the stumbling of the Jews in the darkness.

The heart of verse 5:18 seems to be its final word ἐπέσαντο, “they stumbled” or “fell”. It is probable that an allusion to Isaiah 59:10b lies behind this tradition.⁸¹⁹ “We stumble at noon as in the twilight” (πεσοῦνται ἐν μεσημβρίᾳ ὡς ἐν μεσονυκτίῳ). The canonical tradition spoke of the darkness at the sixth hour. Behind this tradition was the passion prophecy of darkness at noon (μεσημβρίᾳ) in Amos 8:9. The author of the Gospel of Peter changed the canonical darkness at the sixth hour to darkness at noon (μεσημβρίᾳ) in order to connect the passion narrative more closely with the passion prophecy (Gos. Pet. 5:15). A further reflection on the passion prophecy connected the darkness at noon with the stumbling at noon as in the twilight of Isaiah

⁸¹⁶ See above chapter 6.2; see also Henderson 2011, 79–81.

⁸¹⁷ Crossan 1988, 218; Foster, 2010, 322; Henderson 2011, 55.

⁸¹⁸ Crossan 1988, 218–219.

⁸¹⁹ Crossan 1998, 220; see also Foster 2010, 323; Mara 2003, 55.

59:10b. This led to the insertion of the stumbling in the darkness into the passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter. The expansion of the passion prophecy is one characteristic of the author of the Gospel of Peter and he probably made this allusion. The fact that none of the intracanonical gospels mention the content of verse 5:18 is another indicator of the priority of the canonical gospels. The stumbling in the darkness serves the anti-Jewish purpose of the author of the Gospel of Peter.

The stumbling in the darkness at noon is part of a larger eschatological text of judgement in Isaiah 59:9–10: “Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we look for light, and behold darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. We grope for the wall like the blind, we grope like those who have no eyes; we stumble at noon as in the twilight.” In the Gospel of Peter the death of Jesus is a murder (Gos. Pet. 2:5; 5:15), a murder committed by the Jews. They have fulfilled the measure of their sins and now they stumble in the eschatological darkness, which is a divine sign against them. The author of the Gospel of Peter describes that their fall is told in the Scriptures.

The death of Jesus

Verse 5:19 is the only speech of Jesus in the extant fragment of the Gospel of Peter. It has had a central position in the discussion of the Christology of the Gospel of Peter. Jesus cries out on the cross “My power, o power, why hast thou forsaken me?” (ἡ δύναμις μου, ἡ δύναμις, κατέλειψάς με) and immediately after this he dies (καὶ εἰπὼν ἀνελήφθη). Both the final words before the death and description of his death have been interpreted to represent a docetic Christology. They are closely connected to each other and the interpretation of one affects the interpretation of the other. Therefore, they are discussed together.

The docetic interpretation of “My power, o power, why have you forsaken me” presupposes that at this moment the divine Christ separated from the human Jesus. In the Gospel of Peter the death of Jesus is narrated with the passive form ἀνελήφθη. The literal translation of ἀνελήφθη is that he

was taken up. The verb ἀναλαμβάνω was also used as a euphemism for dying. The translation of ἀνελήφθη in verse 5:19 is dependent on how one interprets the Christology of the Gospel of Peter. The former translation indicates that the Lord died. The docetic interpretation of the Gospel of Peter considers that the δύναις of the Lord separated from the earthly body and ascended to heaven.⁸²⁰

The presence of δύναις in the same verse offers support to the docetic interpretation. However, in recent scholarship this interpretation has been largely abandoned. There is no evidence of a distinction between Christ and Jesus in the Gospel of Peter. In fact, neither term appears in the extant fragment. There is no evidence that a divine force descend into Jesus at baptism or otherwise in the Gospel of Peter.⁸²¹ The term δύναις offers support for the docetic interpretation. However, in the first centuries both Christian and Jewish sources use it as a circumlocution for God. Aquila's translation of Psalm 22:1, which is in the background of this tradition, reads *ισχύς μου*. In the synoptic gospels (Mark 14:62, Matt. 26:64, Luke 22:69) the Son of Man is said to be sitting at right side of the Power (ἐκ δεξιῶν καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως). The term δύναις alone does not allow the conclusion that a divine spirit departed from the mortal human.⁸²² The following narrative does not support the docetic interpretation. The Jews lay the body of the Lord on the ground and it causes an earthquake (Gos. Pet. 6:21). The body is buried in the sepulchre and in the resurrection narrative a heavenly Lord emerges from the tomb.⁸²³ The divine spirit of the Lord obviously has not left the body. Within the context of the Gospel of Peter the ἀναλαμβάνω should be translated as he died. Verse 5:19 does not support a docetic interpretation of the Gospel of Peter.

The Gospel of Peter is close to Mark and Matthew in the tradition of Jesus's last words. The cry of dereliction is similar in all three gospels and all of them have an intertextual link to Psalm 22:2.

⁸²⁰ It is also possible to translate ἀναλαμβάνω as he was taken up, but without presupposing a docetic Christology. The verse 5:19b could reflect the tradition that the soul of a person ascends to heaven immediately after death which does not relate to docetism at all. (McCant 1984, 262–263.)

⁸²¹ McCant 1984, 262.

⁸²² McCant 1984, 263; Head 1992, 214.

⁸²³ Foster 2010, 327.

Ps 22:2	ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός μου, πρόσχες μοι, ἵ τὶ ἐγκατέλιπές με;
Mark 15:34	ὁ θεός μου, ὁ θεός μου. εἰς τί ἐγκάτελιπές με;
Matt. 27:46	θεέ μου, θεέ μου, ἵνα τί με ἐγκάτελιπες;
Gos. Pet. 5:19a	ἡ δύναμίς μου, ἡ δύναμις, κατέλειπός με.

The cry of dereliction in the Gospel of Peter is close to Mark and Matthew. The redaction of θεέ/θεός μου into δύνάμεις μου is a circumlocution for God. In Aquila's translation of Psalm 22:2 a similar circumlocution ἰσχύς μου appears which explains its presence in the Gospel of Peter as well.⁸²⁴ Moreover, Foster observes that the preface to the utterance ὁ Κύριος ἀνεβόησε λέγων is similar to Matthew's ἀνεβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ λέγων. The proper name Jesus has once again been replaced by the author's preferred title Lord and the explicit reference to a loud voice (φωνῇ μεγάλῃ) is omitted, but these differences reflect the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. The cry of dereliction of the Gospel of Peter is dependent on Matthew.⁸²⁵ There is, however, one significant difference between Matthew and the Gospel of Peter in terms of the cry of dereliction. In the former Jesus dies immediately after these words, while in the latter several events are narrated before his death. In this regard, the Gospel of Peter is closer to Luke and John. In the third and fourth gospel Jesus dies immediately after his words on the cross, although the narrated words are completely different. The previously discussed verb ἀναλαμβάνω does not appear in the canonical gospels. Mark and Luke use ἐκπνέω, which unambiguously means he died. Matthew and John record that Jesus gave up his spirit

The rending of the temple veil

In Mark and Matthew the rending of the temple veil immediately follows Jesus's death.⁸²⁶ The Gospel of Peter shares vocabulary with the synoptics.

⁸²⁴ McCant 1984, 263.

⁸²⁵ Foster 2010, 324. In Mark 15:34 the cry of dereliction is almost identical with Matthew ἐβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, but Mark does not include the participle λέγων, which is shared by Matthew and the Gospel of Peter (Foster 2010, 324).

⁸²⁶ Crossan 1988, 224–225. In Luke the tearing of the temple veil precedes the death of Jesus. There is no parallel to this tradition in John (Foster 2010, 331).

Mark 15:38 Καὶ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη εἰς δύο ἀπ’ ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω.

Matthew 27:51 Καὶ ἰδοὺ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη ἀπ’ ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω εἰς δύο

Luke 23:45 ἐσχίσθη δὲ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ μέσον

Gos. Pet. 5:20 Καὶ αὐτῆς ὥρας διεράγη τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ εἰς δύο

In the Gospel of Peter it is stated that the temple veil was torn at the same time (αὐτῆς ὥρας) as Jesus dies. The verb is different in the Gospel of Peter and the explicit reference that the veil was torn from top to bottom is omitted. The author of the Gospel of Peter also clarifies that the temple was in Jerusalem.⁸²⁷ In the synoptic gospels the time of the rending of the veil and the location of the temple are only implicitly present in the narrative. Their omission by all three synoptic authors is a less plausible explanation of their existence. It is likely that the author of the Gospel of Peter is dependent on Mark and Matthew. In particular, the clarification that the temple was in Jerusalem implies a later period of composition.

The interpretation of the rending of the temple veil has caused difficulties for the interpreters. The gospels do not provide an explicit explanation of the symbolism of the event. There is no apparent background in the Old Testament for this tradition. The passive form is a divine passive and indicates a divine sign. The interpretations from the context have produced various proposals for each gospel. Crossan concludes that it is not possible to interpret from the context the symbolic meaning of the torn temple veil in the Gospel of Peter. He prefers to leave the question open. Crossan nevertheless argues that the rending of the temple veil has an important significance in the narrative logic of the Gospel of Peter. He includes it among the cataclysmic phenomena that lead to the mourning of the people (Gos. Pet. 7:25).⁸²⁸

Henderson has taken this line of interpretation further. He argues that the rending of the temple veil is one of the signs of judgement against the Jews. Henderson also argues that Jews realize their sins after witnessing the

⁸²⁷ Foster 2010, 331–332.

⁸²⁸ Crossan 1988, 226–227.

signs of judgement.⁸²⁹ The problem with Henderson's interpretations is the rejoicing of the Jewish people after the darkness (Gos. Pet. 6:23a). If the Jews have just realized that they have been given three divine signs of judgement against them, why do they rejoice after these signs? In the Gospel of Peter they rejoice, because the sun has not set and they have not violated the Law. They are blissfully ignorant of their judgement when they hand over the body of the Lord to Joseph. After Joseph has respectfully buried the Lord (Gos. Pet. 6:23b–6:24), the Jews suddenly realize the sins they have committed and the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem (Gos. Pet. 7:25). The narrative does not provide any explanation about what has caused such a dramatic change of heart so that the Gospel of Peter is not consistent in its narrative logic. The probable explanation for the inconsistent narrative logic is that the author of the Gospel of Peter has combined originally separate traditions. I agree with Henderson that in the Gospel of Peter the rending of the temple veil is probably intended as a divine sign of judgement against the Jews and I agree with Crossan that it leads to the mourning of the people. However, the Jews do not immediately realize the significance of the sign and the narrative is inconsistent in depicting the understanding of the Jews.

The earthquake

After the body of the Lord is placed on the ground, it causes an earthquake and great fear among the Jews. In Matthew the earthquake and the fear are consequences of Jesus's death.

καὶ ἡ γῆ πᾶσα ἐσεισθη (Gos. Pet. 6:21) καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐσεισθη (Matt. 27:51)
καὶ φόβος μέγας ἐγένετο (Gos. Pet. 6:21) ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα (Matt. 27:54)

In the Old Testament earthquakes are a frequent sign of God's judgement. Henderson argues that the earthquake is the third sign of divine wrath against the Jews, because they react to it with fear. Fear is the expected response of those facing divine judgement and therefore they likely recognize it as a

⁸²⁹ Henderson 2011, 77.

sign.⁸³⁰ While fear is undoubtedly the proper response to a sign of divine judgement, it is not certain that the Jews realized it had fallen upon them. The problem with this interpretation is the same as in interpreting the rending of the temple veil. The Jews rejoice after the sun shines again at the ninth hour. This is not the expected reaction of those who have recognized a divine sign of judgement against them, let alone three. In the light of the narrative logic it is more probable that the Jews fear the earthquake itself. The author of the Gospel of Peter probably considered the earthquake to be a sign of the judgement against the Jews, but the narrative logic does not indicate that they realize it or that they are afraid of the divine judgement.

The darkness ends

In the Gospel of Peter 6:22 the rending of the temple veil and the earthquake are immediately followed by the end of the darkness (Τότε ἥλιος ἔλαμψε) and it is found to be the ninth hour (καὶ εὐρέθη ὥρα ἐνάτη). The synoptic gospels simply mention that the darkness lasted until the ninth hour (ἕως ὥρας ἐνάτης).⁸³¹ The explicit reference that the sun shone again is a necessary clarification in the Gospel of Peter where the beginning and end of the darkness are separated from each other. The more elaborate version in the Gospel of Peter is later than the laconic statement in the synoptic gospels. In the Gospel of Peter the reference to the beginning and end of the darkness frames the scene of Jesus's death. This is one of the characteristic features of the author's redaction. Therefore, it is probable that he has reworked the canonical material.

The darkness at noon in the passion narratives was based on the prophecy of Amos 8:9, but there is no Scriptural background in the ending of the darkness at the ninth hour.⁸³² The end of the darkness does have an important function in the narrative logic of the Gospel of Peter. The appearance of the sun leads to a reaction among the Jews. They rejoice, because it was found to be the ninth hour and there is time to bury Jesus

⁸³⁰ Henderson 2011, 109–110.

⁸³¹ Jones 2007, 312 notes that Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1,42,3 contains contain the same tradition.

⁸³² Crossan 1988, 232–233 discusses the proposed passion prophecy of Zechariah 14:7.

without violating the commandment to bury the one who has been hung on a tree before sunset. If the Jews had realized that the darkness indicates divine judgment, they would have rejoiced at its end at any moment. In the Gospel of Peter the Jews rejoice, because the darkness has ended before the sunset and there is enough time to bury the one who has been hung on a tree before sunset. This demonstrates that they did not understand the darkness as a sign of divine judgement, but were afraid of breaking the law. Now they can hand over the body of the Lord to Joseph who buries it. This line of interpretation avoids the problem caused by the rejoicing of the Jews in verse 6:23, but at the same time postpones the inconsistency of the narrative to the mourning of the Jews in verse 7:25. This question needs to be addressed in the following chapter.

5.6. The Judgement

7:25 Τότε οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς γνόντες οἷον κακὸν ἑαυτοῖς ἐποίησαν ἤρξαντο κόπτεσθαι καὶ λέγειν· Οὐαὶ ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἡμῶν· ἤγγισεν ἡ κρίσις καὶ τὸ τέλος Ἱερουσαλήμ.

7:25 Then the Jews, the elders and the priests, having realized what evil they had done to themselves, began to mourn and said, “woe to our sins, the judgement draws near and the end of Jerusalem.”

Verse 7:25 is probably the single most important and controversial piece of evidence regarding the anti-Jewish tendency of the Gospel of Peter. The Jewish people, elders and priest mourn their sins. There is no direct parallel to the mourning of the Jews in the canonical gospels. Only Luke 23:48 narrates that the multitude, after seeing the death of Jesus, went away beating their breasts (τύπτοντες τὰ στήθη). There are no verbal agreements between Luke 23:48 and the Gospel of Peter 7:25, but a similar action is described in a similar scene. The beating of breasts (κόπτεται τὰ στήθη) is mentioned in the Gospel of Peter 8:28, although the verb is different. However, the author of the Gospel of Peter used the verb κόπτω four times (Gos. Pet. 7:25, 8:28, 12:52, 12:54) and its presence here might reflect the author’s stylistic preference. Therefore, the author of the Gospel of Peter could have created

verse 8:28 on the basis of Luke 23:48 and verse 7:25 could be a doublet of this tradition.⁸³³

The phrase “do evil” (κακὸν ἐποίησαν) is characteristic of the author of the Gospel of Peter. In verse 7:25 the Jews, the elders and the priests realize what evil they had done to themselves (κακὸν ἑαυτοῖς ἐποίησαν). In verse 4:13 the penitent confesses that they suffer, because of the evil we have done (Ἡμεῖς διὰ τὰ κακὰ ἃ ἐποιήσαμεν οὕτω πεπόνθαμεν). In the Lucan parallel the penitent thief says that they suffer justly for the things they have done (καὶ ἡμεῖς μὲν δικαίως, ἅξια γὰρ ὧν ἐπράξαμεν ἀπολαμβάνομεν). In the guard at the tomb narrative the Jewish leaders fear that the people will harm them (ποιήσωσιν ἡμῖν κακὰ). Matthew’s version of the guard at the tomb narrative does not include a parallel to this detail. The content of verse 7:25 reflects the anti-Jewish redaction of the author, the emphasis of the guilt of the Jews and the judgement of their sins. Therefore, the expression γνόντες οἶον κακὸν ἑαυτοῖς ἐποίησαν is very likely a creation of the author of the Gospel of Peter.

Narrative logic and narrative consistency

Crossan draws attention to the problem that the lamentation of the elders and the priests creates for the narrative logic of the *Cross Gospel*. In the *Cross Gospel* the miracles during the passion prepare for the mourning of the Jews (Gos. Pet. 7:25). The chest beating by the people in turn leads to the concern of the scribes, the Pharisees and the elders who decide to guard the tomb (Gos. Pet. 8:28–8:29). After witnessing the resurrection, they complete the split with the people by suppressing the knowledge of the events at the tomb (Gos. Pet. 11:47–11:48). However, in verse 7:25 the authorities and the people mourn together, but the following narrative presupposes a split between them. This creates a discrepancy in the narrative logic.⁸³⁴

⁸³³ Foster 2010, 352–353, 370–371. The idea that the destruction of the temple was a punishment appears in Justin’s *Dialogue* (Greschat 2007, 209–210) and in Melito’s *Homily* (Karmann 2007, 228–229).

⁸³⁴ Crossan 1988, 27–28.

Crossan also argues, “one must presume that there was some initial mention now lost of the Jewish authorities during the trial”.⁸³⁵ He proposes a comprehensive solution to the problem of the Jewish authorities. He guesses that the *Cross Gospel* spoke only of the elders in the resurrection narrative (Gos. Pet. 8:28, 8:29, 8:31, 10:38). The reason for this solution is that the elders are the only group mentioned in every list of the authorities, and the only group that is mentioned by itself. The redactor of the Gospel of Peter inserted the priests (Gos. Pet. 7:25), the scribes (Gos. Pet. 8:28, 8:31) and the Pharisees (Gos. Pet. 8:28) into the narrative in order to integrate intracanonical traditions with the *Cross Gospel*. The redactor made a crucial mistake by inserting the elders into verse 7:25 as well. The original narrative spoke of the mourning of the Jews, which led to the split between them and the authorities visible in the resurrection narrative (Gos. Pet. 8:28–11:49).⁸³⁶ The split is crucial for Crossan’s thesis of an early passion narrative. It is also vital for his argument that the *Cross Gospel* is not blatantly anti-Jewish. In Matthew the people are guilty along with the authorities, but the *Cross Gospel* exculpates the people. Only conspiracy prevents them from stoning their own leaders. Crossan concludes that: “It is not, therefore, correct to say, as is almost always said of this document that it is intensely anti-Jewish.”⁸³⁷

Crossan’s proposal solves the inconsistencies in the narrative logic of the Gospel of Peter. However, he is forced to include a vast amount of rearrangement in the transition from the passion narrative to the resurrection narrative (Gos. Pet. 6:22–8:28) in order to achieve consistency in the narrative logic. He excludes the burial tradition, which contains the problematic statement that the Jews rejoiced (Gos. Pet. 6:23).⁸³⁸ The disciples hide from the Jews, but this is also part of the later insertion (Gos. Pet. 7:26–7:27).⁸³⁹ Finally, Crossan argues that the mourning of the priests and the elders is a later insertion into the Gospel of Peter. The narrative logic of the *Cross Gospel* is maintained only through omitting practically everything in verses 6:23–7:27 except the mourning of the Jews. This alone calls into

⁸³⁵ Crossan 1988, 263.

⁸³⁶ Crossan 1988, 28, 261, 265.

⁸³⁷ Crossan 1988, 396.

⁸³⁸ Crossan 1988, 243, 264.

⁸³⁹ Crossan 1988, 21.

question the validity of the proposal. I have argued above against the thesis of an early *Cross Gospel* imbedded in the Gospel of Peter. In the light of the overall criticism against Crossan's proposal, I suggest that the proposed narrative logic is not present in the text.

The fundamental problem with Crossan's proposal is that all these changes to the existing material fail to save the narrative consistency. In the trial Herod is in charge of the proceedings. In the resurrection narrative Pilate is in control of guarding the tomb and the Jewish leaders approach him. If the Gospel of Peter is consistent between the different sections of the narrative, why is Herod not mentioned in the resurrection narrative? If there is such a pronounced inconsistency between the trial and the resurrection narrative, is it plausible to transfer the elders from the resurrection narrative to the non-extant section of the trial? The various examples of inconsistency in a relatively short fragment demonstrate that this is not the case and therefore we should restrain from suggesting a narrative consistency between the extant and the lost sections of the Gospel of Peter.

This leads to the conclusion that we do not know whether the authorities mentioned in verse 8:28 were involved in the trial. In the light of the fragmentary and inconsistent evidence, it is best to leave the question open. The fact that in the Gospel of Peter the elders are mentioned more frequently than the other groups combined demonstrates only that the author of the Gospel of Peter regarded them as the principal opponents of Jesus in the resurrection narrative. In the canonical passion narratives the chief priests are mentioned more often than the other opposing groups together.⁸⁴⁰ I argued above that in the second century the high priests were no longer a relevant leadership group in Judaism and the author of the Gospel of Peter replaced them with the elders who held a prominent position in the Jewish communities.⁸⁴¹

Once again, Crossan has recognized the problem in the study of the Gospel of Peter, even if his solution of the composition history of the Gospel of Peter is not attainable. Henderson, for example, presents a similar narrative logic for the Gospel of Peter. He has argued that the miracles and

⁸⁴⁰ See Crossan 1988, 262–265.

⁸⁴¹ See above chapter 4.2.

signs during the passion lead to the repentance of the people.⁸⁴² However, the repentance of the Jews faces the problem that in the following narrative the disciples have to hide from the Jews (Gos. Pet. 7:26) and the women cannot visit the tomb because of the fear of the Jews (Gos. Pet. 12:50). Augustin argues that in the narrated world the women are sought by the Jews and are in real danger if they are seen at the tomb.⁸⁴³ How does this continuing hostility against the followers of Jesus fit together with the suggested genuine repentance and remorse of the Jewish people?

Self-confession of the Jews

The description of the Jewish people and leaders does not seem to follow a consistent narrative logic. Foster notes that the Jews first fear the miracles during the passion (Gos. Pet. 5:15, 6:21), then rejoice (Gos. Pet. 6:21) and finally feel foreboding about the coming judgement (Gos. Pet. 7:25). He concludes that the “questions of cause or details about the extent of remorse are of no interest to the author, rather he uses the description for apologetic purposes in order to further characterize the Jews in a negative manner.”⁸⁴⁴ The purpose of verse 7:25 is to depict the Jews negatively, to describe their confession of sins and approaching divine judgement of their sins, namely the destruction of Jerusalem. The Jews, the elders, and the priests realize the evil they have done to themselves and proclaim that judgement is nigh and the destruction of Jerusalem is the result of their actions. According to Henderson, the divine judgement is retribution for murdering the Lord.⁸⁴⁵ Henderson also notes that the Jews “lament over their sins”.⁸⁴⁶ However, it has to be considered how mourning over retribution and repentance relate to each other. The precise wording of the mourning is “having realized what evil they have done to *themselves*” (γνόντες οἷον κακὸν ἑαυτοῖς ἐποίησαν). Foster

⁸⁴² Henderson 2011, 112. Augustin 2014, 205 correctly notes that after the miracles during the passion of the Lord the Jews rejoice of the reappearance of the sun. He argues that after a short while the Jews realize the significance of the signs. However, a more probable explanation of the sudden changes in the behaviour of the Jews is that the narrative is inconsistent. This conclusion is supported by the fact that there are notable inconsistencies throughout the narrative.

⁸⁴³ Augustin 2014, 275.

⁸⁴⁴ Foster 2010, 351–352. See also Vaganay 1930, 268.

⁸⁴⁵ Henderson 2011, 70, 81.

⁸⁴⁶ Henderson 2011, 107.

observes that the Jews, elders and priests became aware that the consequences of their actions were calamitous for themselves.⁸⁴⁷ “Moreover, their mourning is motivated by self-interest, not by the injustice of the events that have occurred.”⁸⁴⁸ The author of the Gospel of Peter carefully phrased the mourning of the Jews. They do not mourn the sins they have committed against the Lord but the evil they have done to themselves. In other words, the author of the Gospel of Peter emphasized the mourning over the retribution, but does not intend to imply mourning as a form of repentance. This interpretation also explains why Jesus’s disciples are sought after (Gos. Pet. 7:26) and the women who followed Jesus fear the “repenting” Jews (Gos. Pet. 12:50).

I interpret verse 7:25 in the light of similar redactional features at the end of the trial and resurrection narrative. The author of the Gospel of Peter concluded the trial scene with Herod’s statement that a murdered man hung on a tree is to be buried before sunset. Herod, king of the Jews, confesses that he and the other Jews will commit a murder by killing the Lord. The author of the Gospel of Peter used a similar technique to conclude the resurrection narrative. The Jewish leaders confess that they prefer to commit the greatest sin before God. At the end of the passion narrative the Jews, the principal opponents of Jesus, confess the sins they have committed. The author of the Gospel of Peter concluded the trial and the resurrection narrative with the confession of guilt by the principal Jewish protagonists against Jesus. Therefore, I conclude that the author of the Gospel of Peter presented a similar self-confession of guilt of the Jews for murdering the Lord at the end of the passion narrative. The Gospel of Peter does not describe genuine repentance of the Jews, but a thoroughly anti-Jewish passion narrative. The Gospel of Peter does not present a consistent narrative logic, but the author’s anti-Jewish redaction is consistent throughout the extant fragment.

⁸⁴⁷ Foster 2010, 351–352.

⁸⁴⁸ Foster 2010, 352.

5.7. Conclusion

Only two verses of the trial have been preserved in the Akhmîm fragment, but it is probable that in the non-extant section of the narrative Pilate washed his hands. However, there is no evidence to support proposals of the possible content of the trial(s), abuse(s) or other traditions that may or may not have been in the non-extant passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter. In the preserved fragment the anti-Jewish redaction of the author is apparent in the first verses. The culpability for Jesus's death is placed on Herod and his Jewish judges, while Pilate, who leaves in protest, is exonerated. Pilate had probably washed his hands earlier, but the Jews refuse to wash their hands. The author of the Gospel of Peter knew the tradition of Pilates's handwashing from Matthew's gospel and elaborated in the light of his anti-Jewish perspective. The author of the Gospel of Peter knew a tradition from Mark and Matthew that Herod was a king and from Luke that Herod had an opportunity to condemn Jesus. He combined these two traditions and created a narrative where a Jewish king condemns Jesus to be crucified. This narrative does not necessarily reflect his lack of knowledge of first-century Palestine or the traditions of Jesus's death. Instead, it serves his polemical anti-Jewish stance. The anti-Jewish redaction of the author reaches a culmination point at the end of the trial when a Jewish king hands Jesus over to Jewish people. The content of the trial scene can be explained with the author's knowledge of the canonical gospels and his anti-Jewish redaction.

The mockery and abuse scene has been influenced by continuing exegetical efforts to connect the passion of Jesus more thoroughly to the passion prophecies of the Scriptures. However, the starting point of the author of the Gospel of Peter was the descriptions of the mockery and abuse of Jesus in the canonical gospels. The author took the elements of the mockery and abuse from several different scenes in the canonical gospels and brought them together. At the same time he connected them more closely to the passion prophecies and provided new prophetic texts to increase the intertextual relationship between the suffering of Jesus and the Scriptures. Although it is

not explicitly stated in the Gospel of Peter, the mockery and abuse are carried out by the Jewish people.

The crucifixion scene of the Gospel of Peter 4:10–14 is dependent on the canonical gospels. The shared content and vocabulary indicates that there is a literary dependence on Luke. The crucifixion scene of the Gospel of Peter is an example of the difficulty of harmonizing the content and the vocabulary of the four passion narrative. The author of the Gospel of Peter could primarily follow one of his sources. In the crucifixion scene his primary source was Luke 23:39–43. In the guard at the tomb narrative he drew on Matthew and in the empty tomb narrative on Mark. He also inserted traditions and vocabulary from the other gospels to the main source of the particular scene. There are also several details in the Gospel of Peter that are developed beyond the traditions of the canonical gospels. The most notable difference between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels is that the Jewish people crucify Jesus. The inscription king of Israel reflects the change from Roman soldiers to the Jewish people. It also reflects an anti-Jewish tendency of the author of the Gospel of Peter who aligned Jesus with the chosen people Israel and not the contemporary Jews. The author's anti-Jewish redaction explains the development of the traditions of the penitent thief and the non-breaking of the legs. The penitent thief rebukes the Jews and confesses Jesus as the saviour of men. The phrasing is ambiguous whether the Jews decide to increase the torments of Jesus or the penitent thief by not breaking his legs, but in either case, the confession of Jesus as the saviour of men leads to the suffering of Jesus or of someone who believes in him. The crucifixion scene has been rewritten to enhance the anti-Judaism of the passion tradition.

The author drew on the tradition of the darkness at noon, the rending of the temple veil and the earthquake from the canonical gospels. He used these as signs of judgement against the Jewish people who crucified the Lord. The author added an explicit reference to the judgement of the Jews at the end of the passion narrative. The Jews realize what they have brought upon themselves. The judgement of the Jews is the destruction of Jerusalem. This is another indication that the Gospel of Peter was written after the

destruction of Jerusalem in 70. A.D. Moreover, the connection between the guilt of the Jewish people and the destruction of Jerusalem as a judgement of their guilt is a sign of second-century composition of the Gospel of Peter. The author of the Gospel of Peter phrased the mourning of the Jews carefully. In the Gospel of Peter the Jews do not mourn the sins they have committed against the Lord, but the resulting judgement of their actions. Therefore, the Jews do not demonstrate genuine repentance in the Gospel of Peter and continue to oppose Jesus and his followers in the following narrative.

6. Social Context, Rhetoric Situation and Social Identity

6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapters I have examined the Gospel of Peter with the historical critical methods. The primary focus of the examination has been on the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels, and on the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. In this chapter, I first provide a summary of the results of the source and redaction critical studies of the Gospel of Peter. I have argued that the Gospel of Peter is literarily dependent on the canonical gospels. The evidence demonstrates a profound apologetic and polemical redaction of the canonical gospels, which requires a detailed knowledge of their content. Second, I examine the social context behind the Gospel of Peter. My thesis is that the apologetic and polemical redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter are connected to the social context behind the text. I will argue that the author's apologetic redaction attempts to refute Jewish criticism against Christian beliefs and that the anti-Jewish polemical redaction denigrates the Jewish critics of Christianity. I will criticize previous reconstructions of the social context of the Gospel of Peter that have either underestimated the contemporary verbal polemics between Christians and Jews or overestimated the hostile rhetoric as a reflection of violent persecution. In the reconstruction of the social context of the Gospel of Peter I will compare the redaction of the author to the contemporary Jewish criticism against Christian traditions and place the intergroup verbal polemics into the social context of second century Christianity. Third, in the rhetorical critical analysis of the Gospel of Peter I will distinguish between the historical situation and the rhetorical situation of the text. The rhetoric critical analysis examines how the author addressed his message to his audience in the rhetorical situation of the text. Fourth, I apply the social identity approach to explain the extensive denigration of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter and in particular the claim that they are all murderers of the Son of God. Moreover, I will argue that the social identity approach provides an explanation why the author of the Gospel of Peter exonerated Pilate and the Roman soldiers and regarded the Jews as the murderers of the Lord, although the Roman officials

and soldiers were the prominent threat of persecution against second-century Christians.

6.2. Summary of the historical critical study

In the discussion above I have argued that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on the canonical gospels. The presence of features that are found only in one of the canonical gospels in the Gospel of Peter demonstrate the priority of the canonical gospels. I have criticized arguments that the omissions of traditions and changes in the sequence of the passion and resurrection narratives do not demonstrate that the author of the Gospel of Peter did not possess written copies of his sources. In the analysis of the extant text I examined the verbal agreements between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. The verbal agreements are not as extensive as between the synoptic gospels or the Diatessaron and the canonical gospels, but the literary dependence explains the existing evidence better than secondary oral dependence or independence.

The Gospel of Peter is an inconsistent narrative. Several of the inconsistencies are the result of the combination of the originally separate traditions drawn from the canonical gospels. Other inconsistencies were created by the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. In the redaction critical analysis I examined how the author of the Gospel of Peter composed his gospel. The author of the Gospel of Peter rewrote the passion and resurrection narratives in the light of his apologetic and polemical tendencies. The apologetic redaction is so detailed and insightful that the author of the Gospel of Peter must have known the canonical gospels well.

The anti-Jewish redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter

In the non-extant section of the Gospel of Peter Pilate washed his hands and declared his innocence over the death of Jesus. The author of the Gospel of Peter took this explicit description of the exoneration of Pilate from Matthew and elaborated the tradition further. Herod and the Jews were presented with the opportunity to wash their hand, but they refused. The refusal of the Jews to wash their hands is part of the author's more extensive rewriting of Jesus's

trial. His sources unanimously attested that Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified. The author of the Gospel of Peter omitted this tradition entirely. In the Gospel of Peter Pilate does not pronounce a sentence at all. Instead, the author records that he withdrew from the trial in protest. The role of primary authority and responsibility thus fell on Herod. In Luke, Herod has a possibility to condemn Jesus, but he finds him not guilty and sends him back to Pilate. The author of the Gospel of Peter created a narrative where Herod, king of the Jews, commanded Jesus to be crucified. He also added the Jewish judges who did not wash their hands. Later in the narrative the Jews, the elders and the priests (Gos. Pet. 7:25) as well as the scribes, the elders and possibly the Pharisees (Gos. Pet. 11:46) are identified as responsible for the death of Jesus. It is not certain whether the judges can be identified with any or all of these groups, but the author of the Gospel of Peter nevertheless consistently described that the Jews decided on the crucifixion of the Lord.

In the Gospel of Peter Herod hands Jesus over to the Jewish people (Gos. Pet. 2:5). The author of the Gospel of Peter drew this from the vague hint in Luke that Pilate handed Jesus over to the Jewish leaders and people who crucified him. He probably knew the general accusation, possibly similar to the one preserved in First Thessalonians 2:15–16, that the Jews killed the Lord. These provided him with an important starting point for his anti-Jewish passion narrative. However, his other main sources explicitly state that Pilate handed Jesus over to the Roman soldiers. The author of the Gospel of Peter deliberately had to exclude the overwhelmingly clear impression of his sources in order to follow a vague hint in Luke and to write the entire passion narrative in the light of the general accusation that the Jews killed the Lord. He concluded the trial with Herod's confession that he and the other Jews murdered Jesus (Gos. Pet. 2:5).

The passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter has it that the Jewish people mocked, abused and crucified Jesus. Luke had probably intended to hint that the Jewish leaders and people crucified Jesus. However, the author of the Gospel of Peter omitted the explicit and extensive descriptions of the mockery, abuse and crucifixion of the Roman soldiers. He rewrote the image of his sources and attributed the afflictions of Jesus to the Jewish people (Gos.

Pet. 3:6–5:16). He emphasized the culpability of the Jews by inserting a comment that they fulfilled the measure of their sins. The author of the Gospel of Peter concluded the passion narrative with the confession of the sins that the Jews had committed. However, they do not lament the sin of murdering the Son of God, but are concerned about the judgement that will fall on them (Gos. Pet. 7:25).

Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative was the only extensive source that the author of the Gospel of Peter used to compose his version of the narrative. He followed Matthew closely in first scene of the narrative, but also made several minor changes, which altered the description of the Jewish leaders. The author replaced the high priests with scribes as the opponents in order to align the narrative with his contemporary Jewish opponents (Gos. Pet. 8:28). Moreover, he rewrote the reason for the Jewish leaders requesting a guard at the tomb. The Jewish leaders fear that the people will believe in the resurrection of Jesus and do them harm (Gos. Pet. 8:30). This selfish motive has a more pronounced role at the end of the resurrection narrative.

The author of the Gospel of Peter changed Matthew's narrative by placing the elders and the scribes at the tomb with the guards (Gos. Pet. 8:31). The author also inserted the escorted resurrection tradition in the middle of the guard at the tomb narrative (Gos. Pet. 9:35–10:39). Together these changes created a narrative where the Jewish leaders witness the resurrection at first hand. The first hand witness of the resurrection created a different tone for the conspiracy of the Jewish leaders. They return to Pilate with the guards who confess Jesus as the Son of God (Gos. Pet. 11:45). The author of the Gospel of Peter placed Pilate's declaration of innocence and the responsibility of the Jews in the resurrection narrative (Gos. Pet. 11:46). The response of the Jewish leaders is to request Pilate to suppress the knowledge of the resurrection (Gos. Pet. 11:47). In this way, the author of the Gospel of Peter created a contrast between the Jews and the Romans. Pilate and the soldiers confess Jesus as the Son of God, but the Jewish leaders want to deny the people the truth. The final act of the Jewish leaders in the extant fragment of the Gospel of Peter is to confess that they prefer to commit the greatest sin before God than fall into the hands of the Jews (Gos. Pet. 11:48). The author of

the Gospel of Peter concluded the resurrection narrative with the anti-confession of the Jewish leaders that nothing would make them turn to God.

Apologetic redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter

There is an apologetic tendency in the Gospel of Peter. The author attempted to demonstrate that Jesus did not die cursed by the Law (Deut. 21:22–23) and abandoned by God. He connects the passion of Jesus to the prophetic texts. Allusions to the passion prophecies run through the entire passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter. The Scriptures foretold the passion of Jesus and these texts support the claim that he is the Son of God. The darkness, the rending of the temple veil and the earthquake also function as divine signs that testify that Jesus is the Lord.

The apology of the author of the Gospel of Peter is even more pronounced in the resurrection narrative. The author placed the disciples away from the tomb. They were hiding from the Jews and mourning. Their mourning demonstrated their proper devotion to Jesus. At the same time, the Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers make every attempt to secure the tomb. They close the tomb, seal it with seven seals and guard in turn. Ultimately, they only witness the resurrection at first hand and the resurrection is not witnessed only by the followers of Jesus, but also by neutral and hostile witnesses. The apology for the resurrection continues in the empty tomb narrative. The women discover the empty tomb and encounter an angel who tells them that Jesus has returned to heaven. They are still important witnesses to the empty tomb and the resurrection, but the belief in the resurrection of Jesus is no longer dependent on their testimony. The Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers have witnessed the resurrection first hand. Moreover, the women do not receive a message from the angel to tell the disciples of the resurrection. The disciples are unaware of the events at the tomb before Jesus appears to them. They are still mourning when they encounter the risen Jesus. Therefore, their belief in the resurrection of Jesus is solely based on the appearance of Jesus. The description of the disciples'

activity, the resurrection narrative and the empty narrative are all written with the purpose of confirming the reality of the resurrection.

Hypothesis of a social context behind the Gospel of Peter

The apologetic and polemical redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter run through the entire evidence. This consistent redaction raises the question whether they are connected to each other and to the social context in which the Gospel of Peter was written. Is the polemical description of the Jews an attack against Jewish critics and does the apologetic redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter reflect Jewish criticism against Christian traditions? Did the Jews claim that the resurrection was a fraud that was based upon the testimony of grieving women and cowardly men who, in their moment of desperation, had stolen the body of Jesus in order to claim that he had been resurrected from the dead? Moreover, did the Jews argue that Old Testament prophecies did not predict the death of Jesus on the cross? Did they in fact demonstrate that he had died cursed by the law (Deut. 21:22–23) and therefore, the Jews argued, could not be the Messiah or the Son of God?

The Gospel of Peter demonstrates that the author attempted to defend the validity of the Christian traditions. The authority of the disciples is defended as much as possible by emphasizing their devotion to Jesus without denying that they did not follow their master to the end. The women's role as witnesses to the resurrection is rewritten. The actual resurrection is described in detail and by overcoming all obstacles and leaving no other possibility than God's divine intervention as the cause of events. The author also tries to overcome the problem of Deuteronomy 21:22–23 and connects the passion of Jesus to the Scriptures more intensively than his predecessors.

I will argue that the author of the Gospel of Peter described the Jews negatively, because their criticism against Christian traditions posed a threat to the author's community. The Jewish criticism formed a challenge to the Christian community in the social situation where the Gospel of Peter was written and the Jews were subsequently cast as the villains in the narrative, which their criticism was threatening. The author's purpose throughout the

surviving fragment is to refute the charges made by some Jews and to diminish the credibility of the Jewish critics. In the following chapter I will examine external evidence that supports this hypothesis of the social context behind the Gospel of Peter.

6.3. The Gospel of Peter in a social context

Denker argues that the Gospel of Peter was written in a Jewish Christian community that held a docetic Christology.⁸⁴⁹ Denker proposes that the author of the Gospel of Peter attempted to refute Jewish objections against Christian claims. These included accusations that Jesus had died cursed by the law and that the disciples had stolen his body. The intention of the author was to present the Christian standpoint and the sins of the Jews in order to convert some of them.⁸⁵⁰ Therefore, the Gospel of Peter is not an anti-Jewish text.⁸⁵¹

The author of the Gospel of Peter accuses the Jews of the murder of the Lord. There is an obvious sense of distance from Judaism in the Gospel of Peter. However, Denker argues that the author did not portray the Jews from a stereotypical anti-Jewish perspective. The author did not reject the Jewish people as murderers of the Lord or regard them as indifferent. Instead, he was interested in the actions and the fate of the Jews. He did not exclude the possibility of their conversion, but hoped for the repentance of at least some of the Jews. The author emphasizes the guilt of the Jews, because he wants to demonstrate the gravity of their sin in rejecting the Lord. The crucifixion of the Lord is the highpoint of the sins of the Jews. The Jewish people recognize the consequences of their actions and repent, but their leaders suppress the truth of the resurrection and commit the greatest sin before God. The author of the Gospel of Peter did not expect the conversion of the Jewish leaders. Despite the description of the Jewish people as murderers

⁸⁴⁹ Christological beliefs that in one way or another denied the humanity or suffering of Christ were regarded or labelled by opponents as docetic. For a more extensive discussion of docetism in the Gospel of Peter see Foster 2010, 157–165.

⁸⁵⁰ Denker 1975, 78–125.

⁸⁵¹ Denker 1975, 81.

of the Lord, the author still hoped for the repentance and conversion of individual Jews. The connection between the crucifixion of the Lord and the destruction of Jerusalem intends to call the Jews to repentance and faith in the Lord.⁸⁵²

Denker argues that the apologetic redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter demonstrates that he was engaged in a dispute with Jews who had presented objections against Christianity. The author addresses Jewish claims that Jesus died cursed and the disciples stole the body. The apologetic efforts of the author are directed towards the Jews. They are included among the witnesses to the resurrection. Denker also notes that Deuteronomy 21:22–23 has influenced the apologetic intention in Gos. Pet. 2:5, 5:15 and 6:23, and that the author received these references from tradition. Denker argues that the author drew on Jewish interpretation of Deuteronomy 21:22–23.⁸⁵³ The author of the Gospel of Peter adds the interpretation that the Jews bring the curse upon themselves.⁸⁵⁴ The disciples fast for the Jews and are disturbed by their rejection of the Lord.⁸⁵⁵

According to Denker, this Jewish Christian community was not a group or a sect within Judaism.⁸⁵⁶ It did not represent the Ebionite form of Jewish Christianity. The author drew on Jewish terms and traditions. The Gospel of Peter does not provide information on the religious practice of the community or the observance of the law. The Gospel of Peter mentions Sabbath three times (Gos. Pet. 2:5, 7:27, 9:34), but the community also recognized the Lord's Day (Gos. Pet. 9:35, 12:50). The community probably celebrated a weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper and the resurrection on Sunday. However, the celebration of the Lord's Day does not exclude the possibility that the community did not observe the Sabbath. In the Gospel of Peter it is not said that the women rested on the Sabbath and they go to the

⁸⁵² Denker 1975, 78, 81, 85.

⁸⁵³ Denker 1975, 81 observes that the Gospel of Peter and a Tannaitic Midrash interpret Deuteronomy 21:23 as a *genetivus objectivus*. Denker points out further similarities between these texts. Tannaitic Midrash says that the body of the buried is washed and wrapped in linen. The hanged must also be buried with the tree. In the Gospel of Peter Joseph washes the body of the Lord and wraps it in linen (Gos. Pet. 6:24). In the resurrection narrative the cross emerges from the tomb (Gos. Pet. 10:39), which presupposes that it was buried with the Lord. Denker concludes that the Gospel of Peter draws on Jewish traditions.

⁸⁵⁴ Denker 1975, 81, 83.

⁸⁵⁵ Denker 1975, 91.

⁸⁵⁶ Denker 1975, 78.

tomb on Sunday, because the fear of the Jews had prevented them earlier. Similarly, there is no evidence of the observance of the festivals.⁸⁵⁷ Therefore, the Gospel of Peter is a Jewish Christian gospel.⁸⁵⁸

Denker addressed an important issue, which at the time had not received much attention in previous studies of the Gospel of Peter and some of his insights have been well received in subsequent scholarship. However, his pioneering work suffers from notable problems concerning both the community behind the gospel and its intended audience and purpose. Schaeffer observes that scholars have abandoned the once dominant interpretation that the Gospel of Peter represents a docetic Christology. Moreover, the Lord's Day (ἡ κυριακή) is a more prominent feature in the text (Gos. Pet. 9:35, 12:50).⁸⁵⁹ Moreover, the statements concerning the law seem to reflect a distance from it. The commandment to bury a murdered man before sunset is written for "them", i.e. the Jews (Gos. Pet. 5:15) and the feast of the unleavened bread is their feast (Gos. Pet. 2:5). These specifications indicate that Christians should distance themselves from the feasts and commandments of the Torah.⁸⁶⁰ It is difficult to connect these statements and the preference of the Lord's Day over the Sabbath to Denker's proposed Jewish Christian community behind the Gospel of Peter. The evidence does not support Denker's thesis that the Gospel of Peter was written for a Jewish Christian community that held a docetic Christology. Denker's proposal reflects an approach where early Christian texts were interpreted primarily in terms of their theological content. During the past decades the emphasis in biblical scholarship has shifted to more socially oriented questions and scholars have paid more attention to Denker's proposals of the social interaction between Jews and Christians.

Schaeffer agrees that the author of the Gospel of Peter attempted to refute Jewish criticism against the death and resurrection of Jesus. In the Gospel of Peter Jesus's death fulfils the Old Testament prophecies, miraculous signs accompany his death and Joseph buries him honourably. Therefore, his death and burial demonstrate that he did not die accursed by God. In the

⁸⁵⁷ Denker 1975, 78, 85–86.

⁸⁵⁸ Denker 1975, 75, 81, 85–86.

⁸⁵⁹ Schaeffer 1995, 242–244.

⁸⁶⁰ Augustin 2014, 168, 193.

resurrection narrative the disciples are hiding while Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders witness the resurrection.⁸⁶¹ However, she criticizes the proposal that the Gospel of Peter was written for Jews in order to convert some of them. According to Schaeffer, the Jews are depicted as sadistic, foolish and hypocritical. Therefore, the intended audience was not the Jewish community. The Gospel of Peter was written for a Christian community threatened by the outsiders' criticism. The purpose of the negative polemic was to distance the Christian audience from the Jews and to enhance Christian self-definition.⁸⁶²

Schaeffer points out that at least a part of the anti-Judaism in the Gospel of Peter is derived from tradition, including orally transmitted anti-Jewish traditions of Matthew, Luke and John.⁸⁶³ However, in the Gospel of Peter "anti-Jewish feeling is intensified to a degree that surpasses the antagonism expressed in the canonical gospels".⁸⁶⁴ Schaeffer argues that the intensified anti-Judaism is an indication that the social conflict between Christians and Jews was real and serious. According to Schaeffer, the Gospel of Peter "gives strong indications of being set during a time of persecution by Jews, either with or without Roman involvement".⁸⁶⁵ The persecution included threats of physical violence and verbal attacks. Especially the frequent references to mourning and the fear of the Jews are signs of this reality behind the text. In the Gospel of Peter, the Jews are looking for the hiding disciples as evildoers (Gos. Pet. 7:26). The penitent thief, also referred to as an evildoer, has to suffer because of his outspoken faith in Jesus (Gos. Pet. 4:13). The fear and suffering of those who confess Jesus point in the direction of persecution.⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶¹ Schaeffer 1995, 244, 246–247.

⁸⁶² Schaeffer 1995, 244–247. A similar position is held by Nicklas 2000, 219–221. Although Schaeffer criticized Denker, she somewhat surprisingly stated that some Jews who were favorable towards Christianity might have been persuaded (Schaeffer 1995, 244–245). A much discussed verse in the Gospel of Peter has been 7:25 which relates that after the death and burial of Jesus, the people, the elders, and the priests mourn their sins and the end that falls on Jerusalem. Although consistency is not a virtue in the Gospel of Peter, it is difficult to interpret verse 7:25 as a sign of genuine remorse in the light of the hostile behavior of the people and the leaders in the following narrative. Therefore, the verse should be interpreted as a rhetorically effective way to present the Jews themselves confessing their sins and the judgment that they have brought to their holy city.

⁸⁶³ Schaeffer 1995, 249–251.

⁸⁶⁴ Schaeffer 1995, 250.

⁸⁶⁵ Schaeffer 1995, 246.

⁸⁶⁶ Schaeffer 1995, 249.

Schaeffer refers to external evidence in order to support her hypothesis of a conflict between Jewish and Christian communities in the first half of the second century in Syria. Schaeffer emphasizes the effect that the Bar Cochba rebellion had on Christian-Jewish relations. Schaeffer observes that some scholars have argued that after the crushing defeat of the rebellion some, Jews killed Christians. These deaths are reported from Palestine, but Schaeffer questions whether it can be known that local persecutions did not occur elsewhere as well. According to Schaeffer, the tension did not settle down until the latter half of the century and the atmosphere was supercharged with bitterness and fear. Physical attacks were actual or likely. The anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter reflects the persecution of the Christian community.⁸⁶⁷ She concludes that “[i]f actual persecution is in the background, the GosPet could have come from the post-Bar Cochba period, ca. 135–140 C.E.”⁸⁶⁸

Schaeffer’s proposal of persecution contains several problematic elements. However, before critically examining Schaeffer’s arguments, I first need to define what is meant by persecution. Persecution is a difficult term, because its meaning ranges from physical violence and death to any form of experienced or anticipated negative social interaction, including various forms of slander and ostracism. In the following, I use the term persecution in a limited sense, which only includes physical violence and death. Verbal polemics and slander are understood as a separate phenomenon.

Recent scholarship has taken a critical stance towards the previously held conception that Jews frequently persecuted Christians. Their desire and ability to do so was far more limited than previously assumed. One of the key sources in the evaluation of the persecution of Christians in the second century has been Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho. Justin does not shy away from accusing the Jews of persecuting Christians, but the evidence he is able to produce to support this claim points in another direction. The only case he mentions is the Bar Cochba rebellion. In fact, Justin has to admit that

⁸⁶⁷ Schaeffer 1995, 252–255. Schaeffer 1995, 254 also refers to the verbal warfare between Jews and Christians.

⁸⁶⁸ Schaeffer 1995, 255.

the Jews are unable to persecute Christians, because of those who now hold power.⁸⁶⁹

Schaeffer argues that the Gospel of Peter was written during or shortly after unusual circumstances in the second century when Jews did persecute Christians. During the Bar Cochba rebellion it was possible to persecute Christians in Judea, although the motives might have been political rather than religious. It is, however, difficult to see the logic how the Bar Cochba rebellion against Rome in Palestine would have motivated Jews in Syria (or Egypt) to persecute Christians. This is unlikely since there is no evidence that unusual circumstances existed anywhere outside Palestine. Justin's testimony that it was not possible for the Jews to persecute Christians probably still applies. In the light of Justin's comments, it seems unlikely that violence against Christians spread to the Diaspora. In the beginning of the Dialogue Justin writes that Trypho is a refugee of the recent war (Dial. 1:3). This would place the discussion close to the date between 135–140, which Schaeffer has proposed for the Gospel of Peter. The Dialogue itself is written between 150–155 AD. Although derogatory comments are made, it is difficult to find support for claims that the atmosphere between Christians and Jews was "supercharged with bitterness and fear."⁸⁷⁰

The Gospel of Peter cannot be credibly connected to the Bar Cochba rebellion or any other known Jewish persecution of Christians. Nothing in the text refers directly to persecution. A hostile description of the members of another community should not be interpreted as a reflection of a persecution in actual social reality unless there is some external evidence to support it. The Gospel of Peter mentions several times the fear of the Jews (Gos. Pet. 12:50, 12:52, 12:54). A more careful analysis of the theme of the fear of the Jews has shown that several elements speak against Schaeffer's interpretation. First, the theme is taken from the Gospel of John and as such, it could be a piece of tradition that is passed on without particular connection to contemporary events. More importantly, the author has made a significant redactional change. In the Gospel of John, it is said that the disciples were afraid of the Jews (John 19:38; 20:19). In the Gospel of Peter, however, this is

⁸⁶⁹ Setzer 1994, 144; Lieu 1996, 132–135. See also Henderson 2011, 211–212.

⁸⁷⁰ Schaeffer 1995, 254.

no longer the case. The author has replaced this motif to concern only the women who followed Jesus. The disciples are hiding, but they are not afraid. The author's redaction seems to protect the honour of the disciples. The frequent references to mourning emphasize their devotion and turn the attention away from fear. The apologetic interest controls the description of disciples and women.⁸⁷¹

In the second century Jews did not persecute Christians. The Gospel of Peter cannot be connected to any known Jewish persecution of Christians. The hostile polemic against Jews in the Gospel of Peter cannot be taken as evidence of persecution unless there is external evidence to support it.⁸⁷² The examples that Schaeffer presents to support her argument, do not establish a connection between the hostile description of the Jews in the text and persecution in social reality. However, the most critical evidence against Schaeffer's proposal is that there does not seem to be a connection between persecution and the hostile description in the Christian sources of the second century. In the second century, Romans could and did imprison, torture and kill Christians. The letters of Pliny provide the first explicit evidence of this practice.⁸⁷³ The further we move from the first century to the second, the persecution of Christians at the hands of the Romans becomes more likely. The social experience of the Christians of the second century was that the Romans persecuted them, but the Jews did not. If the persecution in social reality had led to a more hostile description of the persecutors, then we would have seen more anti-Roman descriptions in the Christian sources of the second century. However, exactly the opposite happened. The Romans are depicted more favourably and the Jews more negatively.⁸⁷⁴ The logic behind

⁸⁷¹ See above chapter 3.2.

⁸⁷² There is a good example in the Gospel of Peter of a lack of connection between a hostile description of the Jews and a persecution in the social reality. In the Gospel of Peter the Jewish leaders fear that the people will do them harm (Gos. Pet. 8:30) and stone them (Gos. Pet. 11:48). The Jewish people are described as violent against their own leaders and the Jewish leaders are characterized as hypocrites. The author of the Gospel of Peter created a negative image of the Jewish people and leaders, but this negative description of the Jews does not imply that they were violent in the social reality. In the Gospel of Peter the Jews are hostile towards the disciples (Gos. Pet. 7:26) and the women (Gos. Pet. 12:50). The author of the Gospel of Peter promoted a negative characterization of the Jews in these verses as well, but the negative characterization cannot be directly translated into a Jewish persecution of Christians or any other form of social interaction between these groups. The polemical description of another group is a conventional feature of the ancient rhetoric and it should be taken into consideration in the analysis of the Gospel of Peter (see below chapter 6.3).

⁸⁷³ Stegemann and Stegemann 1999, 323–324, 331–332.

⁸⁷⁴ For a list of examples see Henderson 2011, 82–88, 91–92.

this development seems to have been connected to self-preservation. The Romans were recognized as a genuine threat and it was reasonable not to provoke them with anti-Roman texts. The Jews could not persecute Christians and it was possible to compose thoroughly anti-Jewish texts without a direct threat of persecution.

The passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter is a prime example of this phenomenon. The sources of the author of the Gospel of Peter stated that the Roman prefect and soldiers condemned, abused and crucified Jesus. The members of the author's community knew and feared that a similar fate could await them. If the experience of persecution explained the polemic in the Gospel of Peter, the responsibility of the Romans would have increased in the Gospel of Peter. Instead, the author of the Gospel of Peter exonerated the Romans and blamed the Jews. There does not seem to be a connection between the persecution of Christians and the anti-Jewish development of the passion narrative. Persecution in social reality and hostile description in the texts seem to move in opposite directions.

Subsequent scholarship has not followed Schaeffer's persecution thesis. This is most apparently visible in Verheyden's article on the purpose of the Gospel of Peter. Verheyden notes that the purpose of the gospel has not been sufficiently explored and explained.⁸⁷⁵ In his analysis he argues against a deliberate, independent intention of the author. According to Verheyden, there is not enough evidence to support the claim that the author is correcting his sources. His use of sources is seemingly indiscriminate and a coherent purpose cannot be distinguished. The changes to the canonical gospels are "unreflected".⁸⁷⁶ Similarly, there is no conscious reflection concerning the anti-Jewish presentation of the Jews. The re-telling of the passion narrative that depicts the Jews as murderers of Jesus presents the story as Christians commonly understood it.⁸⁷⁷ The anti-Jewish description merely transmits previous traditions and does not arise out of a contemporary conflict. Verheyden concludes that the Gospel of Peter is a popular account that

⁸⁷⁵ Verheyden 2007, 284–285.

⁸⁷⁶ Verheyden 2007, 288–289.

⁸⁷⁷ Verheyden 2007, 292–297.

reflects the content of the canonical gospels and the general anti-Jewish prejudices of his audience without any clear intention.⁸⁷⁸

Henderson has recently developed further the thesis that the Gospel of Peter was written as a response to Jewish and Gentile criticism against Christian claims. Henderson's insights challenge Verheyden's claim that the Gospel of Peter contains only stereotypical polemic without any connection to contemporary social reality. Henderson argues that the author was familiar with the criticism that had been levelled against the Christian traditions and the written gospels. This criticism played a formative role in the author's rewriting of the sources he used. In the Gospel of Peter the passion and resurrection narratives are rewritten in a way that it provides an answer to the criticism from the first and second century.⁸⁷⁹ This apologetic rewriting is particularly visible in the resurrection narrative. Jesus appears to his enemies, but not to the women. The disciples receive knowledge of resurrection directly from the Lord himself. The Gospel of Peter answers objections that Jesus did not appear to his enemies but to a hysterical woman, by describing Jews and Romans alike as witnessing the resurrection. The apologetic redaction is a response to the contentions of outsiders in the author's social context.⁸⁸⁰

Henderson claims that the anti-Jewish sentiments of the author of Gospel of Peter are obvious because in this gospel Pilate and the Roman soldiers are exonerated and the execution of the Lord is carried out by the Jews. The anti-Jewish redaction is also apparent in the empty tomb narrative. Henderson argues that the author's anti-Jewish redaction reflects a social conflict between Christians and Jews. Henderson is cautious and even somewhat obscure in analysing the relationship between the author's anti-Jewish narrative and the social reality. He repeatedly states that the narrative reflects some kind of conflict between Christian and Jewish communities. The conflict may have been real or perceived, and the author either had personally experienced and/or knew about conflicts between Christians and Jews. Henderson concludes that the author regarded the Jews as opponents, but

⁸⁷⁸ Verheyden 2007, 298–299.

⁸⁷⁹ Henderson 2011, 221, 224.

⁸⁸⁰ Henderson 2011, 222–223.

that it is impossible to be certain of the details about what they were saying or doing.⁸⁸¹

Henderson's cautious approach avoids the problems of Schaeffer's straightforward reconstruction of Jewish persecution in the social reality behind the hostile anti-Jewish rhetoric of the Gospel of Peter. Henderson's approach, however, leads to the other extreme. He presents various possible conflicts between Christians and Jews and it is difficult to determine which one he upholds. He presupposes some type of conflict, but the nature of the conflict is left open. His concluding remark that "[w]e can never be certain of precisely what the author's Jewish 'opponents' (as he viewed them) were doing or saying"⁸⁸² sets too high standards for a historical reconstruction. We cannot be certain of the precise details of the historical reality, but the reconstruction of the past aims at discovering the most likely interpretation of the main issue.

External evidence of Jewish criticism against Christian traditions

The nature of the conflict between Christians and Jews can be examined in the light of contemporary sources. Justin mentions five times that according to the Jews a crucified individual is cursed by God and therefore Jesus could not have the Messiah or God. Justin presents considerable efforts to demonstrate that the Scriptures foretold the crucifixion. Setzer argues that Justin's extensive treatment of the issue indicates that he was addressing a topic that was an important part of contemporary debates between Christians and Jews.⁸⁸³ Henderson argues that Justin's remarks in the *Dialogue with Trypho* 108 reflect actual Jewish objections against Christian, although Justin clearly exaggerates the extent of Jewish efforts:⁸⁸⁴

He arose from the dead, but, as I stated, you chose certain men and commissioned them to travel throughout the whole civilized world and announce: "A godless and lawless sect has been started by an impostor, a certain Jesus of Galilee, whom we nailed to the cross, but whose body, after it

⁸⁸¹ Henderson 2011, 221–224.

⁸⁸² Henderson 2011, 225.

⁸⁸³ Setzzer 1994, 178–180.

⁸⁸⁴ Henderson 2011, 150.

was taken from the cross, was stolen at night from the tomb by His disciples, who now try to deceive men by affirming that He has arisen from the dead and has ascended into Heaven.”

The accusation that the disciples stole Jesus’s body appears for the first time in Matthew’s guard at the tomb narrative. The chief priests and elders bribe the soldiers to say that the disciples stole the body while they were sleeping (Matt. 28:13). At the end of the narrative Matthew adds a comment that this story is still being told among the Jews (Matt. 28:15). Matthew indicates that the accusation was a frequently occurring theme in Jewish objections towards Christianity.

Denker draws attention to a slightly different version of accusation that the claims of the resurrection of Jesus were related to the removal of the body from the tomb. Tertullian preserves a tradition that the Jews claim a gardener relocated the body of Jesus, because he wanted to protect his lettuces from the numerous visitors to the tomb (De spectaculis 30.6). This tradition provides another polemical explanation for the empty tomb and Jesus’s resurrection.⁸⁸⁵ Tertullian probably wrote some decades after the Gospel of Peter was written and the polemical tradition is not necessarily earlier than the Gospel of Peter. However, if the tradition is later than the Gospel of Peter, then the empty tomb and Jesus’s resurrection continued to draw Jewish criticism in the last decades of the second century. The tradition also demonstrates that Jews knew details of the Christian gospels and presented criticism against them.⁸⁸⁶

Henderson argues that the criticism that Celsus presented against Christian traditions and claims is also important for understanding the apologetic of the Gospel of Peter.⁸⁸⁷ Celsus was a middle Platonist philosopher who wrote the first extensive critique of Christianity,⁸⁸⁸ *True Doctrine*, between 170–180 A.D.⁸⁸⁹ Celsus’s *True Doctrine* has not survived as an independent work. However, much of Celsus’s criticism against Christianity is

⁸⁸⁵ Denker 1975, 84. See also Setzer 1994, 40; Henderson 2011, 151.

⁸⁸⁶ Henderson 2011, 185–187. Celsus also claims that the belief in the resurrection was based on a deception of the disciples (Stezer 1994, 148).

⁸⁸⁷ Henderson 2011, 117–118, 182–189.

⁸⁸⁸ Wilken 1984, 94; Cook 2000, 7, 17. For a more detailed discussion of Celsus’ philosophical background see Cook 2000, 17–22.

⁸⁸⁹ Cook 2000, 23–24. See also Henderson 2001, 117.

preserved in Origen's *Contra Celsum*, which aims to refute Celsus's criticism. In his reply to Celsus's work Origen cites Celsus before presenting a refutation of the critical claims.⁸⁹⁰ Origen probably rearranged and omitted some sections of Celsus's *True Doctrine*.⁸⁹¹ Nevertheless, it is possible to reconstruct most of the content and even wording of *True Doctrine*.⁸⁹² Celsus knew the main outline and events of the gospels. His criticism focused on the virgin birth, the baptism, the miracles, the death and the resurrection.⁸⁹³

Celsus criticized Christians that the appearances of Jesus were insufficient to demonstrate Jesus' resurrection. If Jesus was truly raised from the dead, he should have appeared to his enemies. Jesus appeared only to his followers, who were prone to believe in his resurrection or even participate in a betrayal. An appearance to his enemies would have provided credible demonstration of the resurrection.⁸⁹⁴

If Jesus really wanted to show forth divine power, he ought to have appeared to the very men who treated him spitefully and to the man who condemned him and to everyone everywhere (c. Cels. 2.63).

Celsus presents criticism against the fact that Jesus appeared only to his followers. In particular, Celsus criticizes that Jesus appeared to a hysterical woman.⁸⁹⁵

While [Jesus] was still alive he did not help himself, but after death he rose again and showed the marks of his punishment and how his hands had been pierced. But who saw this? A hysterical female, as you say, and perhaps some other one of those who were deluded by the same sorcery (c. Cels. 2.55)

Henderson correctly connects the apologetics of the Gospel of Peter to the criticism preserved in *True Doctrine*.⁸⁹⁶ Henderson does not argue that the author of the Gospel of Peter responded directly to the criticism presented by Celsus. However, Celsus's criticism demonstrates the existence

⁸⁹⁰ Wilken 1984, 94.

⁸⁹¹ Cook 2000, 24–25.

⁸⁹² Wilken 1984, 94.

⁸⁹³ Wilken 1984, 109; Cook 2000, 26.

⁸⁹⁴ Setzer 1994, 148; Cook 2000, 56–57; Henderson 2011, 185.

⁸⁹⁵ Wilken 1984, 111; Setzer 1994, 148; Cook 2000, 55–56; Henderson 2011, 187.

⁸⁹⁶ Henderson 2011, 189–190.

of outsiders' criticism against those aspects of Christian preaching that the author's apologetic redaction attempts to defend.⁸⁹⁷ In addition to the passages that Henderson cites, there are other critical claims in *True Doctrine* that seem to be connected to the apologetic of the Gospel of Peter. Celsus criticizes that before his death Jesus preached openly to all, but after his death only appeared to a hysterical woman and some of the disciples (c. Cels. 2.70).⁸⁹⁸ Celsus criticizes the disciples for betraying and abandoning Jesus when he was arrested (c. Cels. 2.9).⁸⁹⁹ There is also one further passage that might be relevant in the discussion of the criticism against Christianity. Origen preserves a tradition that it is written in the Gospel of Peter or the Book of James that the brothers of Jesus were Joseph's children from his earlier marriage (Comm. in Mt. 10:17). The purpose of this tradition was to defend the perpetual virginity of Mary.⁹⁰⁰ Celsus presents the accusation that the virgin birth is a lie. In reality, Mary was an adulterer and Jesus's father was a Roman soldier named Panthera (c. Cels. 1.32).⁹⁰¹ However, there are uncertainties in connecting the Gospel of Peter to the criticism of the virgin birth. First, Origen's reference to the Gospel of Peter is very short and its reliability can be questioned. The Book of James is probably the Protoevangelium of James, which narrates that Joseph had sons before he was married to Mary (Prot. James. 9.2).⁹⁰² Therefore, it is possible that Origen's statement could refer to the Protoevangelium of James and not necessarily to the Gospel of Peter. Second, even if Origen preserves a reliable tradition of the Gospel of Peter, the tradition of the perpetual virginity is not directly connected to criticism against virgin birth. However, if one accepts the thesis that the Gospel of Peter responds to criticism against the death, the resurrection and the followers of Jesus, the virgin birth is probably the most obvious tradition that would have drawn criticism as well.

⁸⁹⁷ Henderson 2011, 183.

⁸⁹⁸ Cook 2000, 57.

⁸⁹⁹ Setzer 1994, 148; Cook 2000, 49.

⁹⁰⁰ Foster 2010, 102.

⁹⁰¹ Wilken 1984, 109–110; Setzer 1994, 148–149; Cook 2000, 28–29.

⁹⁰² Foster 2010, 102 n. 359.

The identity of the critics

The author of the Gospel of Peter seems to respond to outsiders' criticism against Christian traditions. This conclusion challenges Verheyden's claim that the author's use of the canonical gospels is unreflected.⁹⁰³ The detailed apologetic of the Gospel of Peter demonstrates the deliberate intention of the author and coherent correcting of his sources in the light of the outsiders' criticism. This conclusion leads to the question of the identity of the outside critics. Denker and Schaeffer argue that the author of the Gospel of Peter attempts to refute Jewish criticism that Jesus died cursed by God and Jesus's disciples stole his body.⁹⁰⁴ Henderson argues that the author addresses both Jewish and Gentile criticism against Christianity.⁹⁰⁵ Henderson draws attention to Celsus's criticism against the fact that Jesus did not appear to his enemies, but to his followers and more precisely to a hysterical woman.⁹⁰⁶ I have argued above that Celsus's criticism against the disciples' flight is also relevant in understanding the apologetic redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter.

The criticism that Jesus died cursed by God presupposes Deuteronomy 21:22–23 and the acceptance of the authority of the Torah. Therefore, the argument that Jesus was cursed derives from Jewish critics of Christianity. The accusation that the disciples stole Jesus's body is consistently attributed to the Jews in sources that were written before the Gospel of Peter.⁹⁰⁷ There is no indication that the earliest criticism against the death and resurrection of Jesus was not presented by Jewish critics of Christianity.

The issue becomes more complicated when we examine the criticism against the appearances of Jesus and the witnesses of the resurrection. The central figure in this discussion is Celsus. Celsus is the first known Gentile author who presented criticism against Christianity that is reflected in the apologetic of the Gospel of Peter. However, in the first two

⁹⁰³ Verheyden 2011, 288–289.

⁹⁰⁴ Denker 1975, 78–81; Schaeffer 1995, 244.

⁹⁰⁵ Henderson 2011, 221, 224.

⁹⁰⁶ Henderson 2011, 185–187.

⁹⁰⁷ Henderson 2011, 148 observes that Jews presented the earliest criticism against Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus.

books Celsus, attributes some of his criticism to an unnamed Jew. Celsus seems to draw some of his criticism of Christianity from Jewish traditions. The exact nature of the source is unclear. Celsus could have relied on a written or oral source.⁹⁰⁸ Celsus presents all of the above-mentioned passages from *True Doctrine* as the arguments of an unnamed Jew. Celsus's Jew claims that Mary was an adulteress (c. Cels. 1.32), the disciples betrayed and abandoned Jesus (c. Cels. 2.9) Jesus appeared to a hysterical woman (c. Cels. 2.55) or to a little woman in secret (c. Cels. 2.70), but did not demonstrate his resurrection by appearing to his enemies (c. Cels.2.63). The author of the Gospel of Peter seems to respond to criticism that is preserved in Celsus' *True Doctrine*. More importantly, the author seems to respond to criticism that Celsus consistently attributes to a Jew who criticizes Christian traditions. Therefore, Celsus at least presented the criticism that is directly relevant for the apologetic of the Gospel of Peter as a criticism of a Jew.

There is also a chronological argument that supports the conclusion that *True Doctrine* preserves Jewish criticism against the death and resurrection of Jesus that is earlier than the Gospel of Peter. Celsus wrote *True Doctrine* between 170–180 AD. Henderson observes that Celsus wrote his treatise after the Gospel of Peter. However, the Jewish criticism his arguments seem to be taken over from much earlier Jewish criticism against Christianity. The Jewish objections against Christian traditions have been dated to the beginning of the second century.⁹⁰⁹ Therefore, Celsus probably wrote his book after the Gospel of Peter, but the Jewish criticism existed before the Gospel of Peter was written.

Prior to Celsus the Gentile criticism against Christianity focused on the nightly meeting where sexual promiscuity and cannibalism were practised. They reflect stereotypical prejudices against foreign cults.⁹¹⁰ Jewish criticism seems to have been consistently better informed about Christian beliefs and focused on many of the issues addressed in the Gospel of Peter. The sources do not claim that Jews presented typical Gentile criticism of Christianity before Origen, who records them in the third century. This

⁹⁰⁸ Cook 2000, 27; Henderson 2011, 182–183.

⁹⁰⁹ Henderson 2011, 183.

⁹¹⁰ Cook 2000, 5–6.

division is reflected in the beginning of Justin's Dialogue with Trypho. Justin asks Trypho whether the Jews believe the accusations that Christians eat human flesh and practise sexual promiscuity in their nightly gatherings. Trypho rejects such notions as repulsive to human nature (Dial. 10:1–2). Justin at least imagined this kind of division between Jewish and Gentile criticism against Christianity in the middle of the second century. In the light of the overall evidence, it seems that Justin's remarks reflect the reality of the second century. Moreover, if the criticism against the content of the gospels derives from Jewish and Gentile opponents of Christians, it does not provide an explanation why the former are consistently described negatively and the latter primarily positively in the Gospel of Peter. Henderson is forced to search for an explanation for the anti-Jewish redaction from a vague and uncertain conflict between Christians and Jews. Therefore, the apologetic and polemic in the Gospel of Peter reflects the verbal polemics between Christians and Jews in the second century.

The detailed apology of the Gospel of Peter also suggests that it was not written in a context of persecution. Members of a community who are afraid for their lives are probably not concerned with revising the details of their gospel text. Jewish criticism and verbal polemic offers a plausible explanation for the apologetic and polemical redaction. Contemporary sources demonstrate that Jews criticized Christians for exactly those issues that are addressed in the apologetic redaction of the Gospel of Peter. They are present in the text to the extent that it is hardly a coincidence. Furthermore, the hypothesis of verbal polemics finds external support that is almost completely lacking in the persecution hypothesis. Therefore, I suggest that actual persecution does not explain the hostile description of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter. We should rather search for the explanation in the verbal polemics.

Is the Gospel of Peter pro-Roman?

I have explained the anti-Jewish redaction of the Gospel of Peter as a reaction to Jewish objections against Christian traditions. A necessary consequence of

the anti-Jewish redaction of the passion narrative is the exoneration of Pilate and the Roman soldiers. However, the exoneration of the Romans can be regarded as a simultaneous or even primary motive to enhance the guilt of the Jews. In the second century, Christians faced a serious threat from the Roman government. Therefore, it is possible that the author of the Gospel of Peter intended to exclude any conflict between Christianity and the Roman state. Henderson, for example, argues that the author of the Gospel of Peter describes Pilate as innocent to the death of the Lord in order to present an apology towards Roman officials.⁹¹¹ However, the Gospel of Peter preserves evidence that the author did not create a consistently positive portrait of Pilate. Denker, however, observes that Pilate and the Roman soldiers are exonerated in the Gospel of Peter, and instead Herod and the Jewish people are responsible for the crucifixion of the Lord. Denker does not regard the Gospel of Peter as a pro-Roman text. Pilate is exonerated in the trial, but his image is not unequivocally positive in the resurrection narrative. Pilate reaffirms his innocence of the death of Jesus and confesses him as the Son of God (Gos. Pet. 11:46). However, Pilate also accepts the request of the Jewish leaders and orders his soldiers to suppress the truth of the resurrection (Gos. Pet. 11:48). In Matthew's guard at the tomb narrative, Pilate does not receive information of the events at the tomb and is not involved in the suppression of the truth. Denker concludes that author of the Gospel of Peter did not have a pro-Roman intention.⁹¹²

Denker's insight calls into question the validity of the claim that the author of the Gospel of Peter presents an apology for the Romans. The trial scene provides further evidence to support this conclusion. Although Pilate is exonerated in the trial, the scene does not present a favourable description for an intended Roman audience. The Gospel of Peter states that Pilate has to request the body of the Lord from Herod. Furthermore, Pilate's protest seems to indicate that he is unable to prevent the crucifixion. It has to be noted that only the last verses of the trial are preserved and Pilate is in charge of the tomb. The description of Pilate is not consistent. Nevertheless, the clear impression in the trial scene is that the Roman prefect is in an

⁹¹¹ Henderson 2011, 221–222, 224.

⁹¹² Denker 1975, 79–80.

inferior position in relation to the Jewish king. It is difficult to maintain that the author of the Gospel of Peter intended to present an apology for the Roman officials and described a Roman official as a subordinate of a local Jewish regent. Therefore, the Gospel of Peter was not written to present a favourable image of Christianity for the Romans. The Gospel of Peter is primarily an anti-Jewish text and the more favourable image of the Romans is of secondary concern for the author of the Gospel of Peter.

6.3. Rhetoric critical analysis of the Gospel of Peter

In the previous chapter I argued that the Gospel of Peter was written in a social context where Jewish criticism against the fundamental Christian traditions threatened the legitimacy and ultimately the existence of the Christian community. The author of the Gospel of Peter rewrote existing passion and resurrection traditions in order to defend the convictions of the Christian community in a context of conflict with Jewish critics. The apologetic and polemical redaction of the Gospel of Peter were explained in the light of this historical situation. In the rhetoric critical analysis of the Gospel of Peter I will analyse how the author used rhetoric to convince his audience to uphold their belief in Jesus as the Son of God. The following rhetorical analysis is carried out within a framework of a rhetorical situation and I will analyse how the author's rhetoric functioned in the rhetorical situation. Therefore, the following rhetoric critical analysis of the text begins with a reconstruction of the rhetorical situation of the Gospel of Peter. The complex rhetorical situation of a fragmentary ancient text requires a detailed analysis of the evidence. The historical critical analysis of the sources, redaction and social context of the Gospel of Peter provides information that is needed to reconstruct the rhetorical situation of the apocryphon.

In the rhetorical critical analysis I will focus on examining how the rhetorical situation and the rhetorical discourse functioned in a dialectical relationship. The rhetorical situation called the rhetorical discourse into existence and the discourse provided a response to the rhetorical situation. The primary purpose of the rhetoric critical analysis is to examine the

intention of the author of the Gospel of Peter. The historical situation and the rhetorical situation are different concepts and they provide information of different aspects of the apocryphal gospel. The following rhetoric critical analysis will demonstrate that their distinction provides solutions to the purpose of the Gospel of Peter. I will analyse the author's rhetoric in the light of the rhetorical situation and examine how the author of the Gospel of Peter composed his text to serve the rhetorical needs of the community.

The rhetoric situation of the Gospel of Peter and the intention of the author

The rhetorical situation formed the context where the author of the Gospel of Peter created his rhetorical discourse. In Bitzer's model of the rhetorical situation the three constituents of the rhetorical situation are the exigence, the audience and the constraints. The Jewish criticism against the Christian gospel was the exigence that invited the rhetorical discourse in the rhetorical situation of the Gospel of Peter. The author perceived that the Jewish criticism threatened the credibility of the most important Christian traditions, and by extension the identity and legitimacy of the whole community. The Jewish criticism created a situation that required a response from the author of the Gospel of Peter.

The audience of the rhetorical situation of the Gospel of Peter was the Christian community and the author's response was directed to the members of the Christian community. The author of the Gospel of Peter feared that the audience had been or could be disturbed by the criticism. The rhetoric of the author of the Gospel of Peter attempts to reassure members of the Christian community whose faith might have been faltering. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the gospels were written primarily for Christian communities.⁹¹³ Moreover, the only testimony from antiquity provides evidence that the Gospel of Peter was read in the Christian community in Rhossus. The positive description of Pilate might reflect the author's intention to depict Christianity as politically harmless to the Roman Empire and to remove the tension caused by the fact that a Roman governor

⁹¹³ Hietanen 2011, 65.

had executed Jesus. However, this intention was not the main concern of the author of the Gospel of Peter. Pilate is depicted more positively in the Gospel of Peter, but the narrative would not have been entirely pleasant reading for Roman officials. Pilate is seen to be in an inferior position to king Herod and has to make a request to him. This forms a stark contrast to reality and how the Romans perceived themselves. The Gospel of Peter would have been an insult to Roman authority and therefore it was probably not directed at Roman officials.

The third element of the rhetorical situation of the Gospel of Peter was the constraints. The author of the Gospel of Peter perceived the exigence and demonstrated significant creative latitude in formulating some aspects of his rhetorical discourse. However, at the same time numerous constraints guided the author's response to the situation he encountered. He was a member of a Christian community and this bound him to the traditions and beliefs of the community. The author revised the canonical gospels and their traditions, but was to a certain extent constrained by these traditions. We have evidence of the passion and resurrection traditions that formed the main constraints of his rhetorical discourse. The canonical gospels were the main sources that the author of the Gospel of Peter used. This invites an analysis of the rhetoric of the Gospel of Peter in comparison with the canonical gospels.⁹¹⁴

The author of the Gospel of Peter demonstrated considerable freedom in rewriting the passion and resurrection narratives, but the traditions of the four gospels nevertheless constrained him. There were several constraints in the tradition of the death and resurrection of Jesus that the author had to take into consideration when he composed his gospel. For example, Jesus's crucifixion, the flight of the disciples and the women's role in the empty tomb narrative were established parts of the passion and resurrection traditions that had invited criticism. The traditions could not be completely omitted and a rhetorical discourse that responded to the criticism had to take these constraints into consideration. Moreover, the author of the

⁹¹⁴ Classen 2000, 48 argues that the Letter to Titus should be analysed in light of the genuine Pauline letters that were in circulation and served as a model to the pseudepigraphical letter. The canonical gospels were not only models for the Gospel of Peter, but sources that he directly consulted. The methodology of rhetorical criticism requires that the Gospel of Peter should not be analysed in isolation of its sources.

Gospel of Peter had to take into consideration the Jewish criticism of Christian traditions. The Jewish criticism was a fact or an event that could constrain the audience's decisions. The Christian traditions and Jewish criticism of them provided the main constraints of the rhetorical situation. These facts did not create the exigence or predetermine the author's response, but they were constraints which the author could not ignore. The author's perception of the interaction between Christians and Jews was an antecedent of the Gospel of Peter. The author of the Gospel of Peter encountered a situation that included these observable facts, and he created the controlling exigence according to his perception of that situation. The creation of the controlling exigence was grounded in the social experiences of the author and these experiences influenced his rhetorical response. Therefore, the historical situation did not create the exigence, but the exigence that the author of the Gospel of Peter perceived was deeply rooted in the social situation. The rhetoric of the Gospel of Peter is analysed in the light of this rhetorical situation.

I have reconstructed above the historical situation and the rhetorical situation of the Gospel of Peter. The research history of the Gospel of Peter demonstrates that there is a need to make a distinction between the historical and the rhetorical situation. Denker's valuable analysis of the Jewish criticism behind the Gospel of Peter is undermined by his argument that this anti-Jewish text addresses the Jews in order to convert at least some of them. Although the author of the Gospel of Peter attempted to refute the criticism that some Jews had levelled against Christian claims, the anti-Jewish polemic of the text is not intended to convince the Jews of their sins. Schaeffer correctly criticizes Denker for ignoring the extremely negative portrayal of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter. However, this negative image of the Jews led Schaeffer to conclude that the Gospel of Peter was written during or soon after a persecution of Christians by Jews. Several problems with the persecution hypothesis were noted above. The methodological problem in Schaeffer's analysis is that she interprets the hostile rhetoric against the Jews as a sign of violent persecution by the Jews in the social reality.

Schaeffer's thesis cannot be sustained in the light of the critical examination, but it is also problematic in the light of the rhetorical conventions of intergroup disputes in antiquity. Polemical rhetorical conventions were an influential form of rhetoric and they typified ancient intergroup disputes. Christians, Jews and Gentiles all participated in the denigration of others with whom they disagreed.⁹¹⁵ An important point is that this kind of stereotypical slander was not affected by facts, but was instead meant for the internal consumption of the group with a view to extolling it at the cost of others.⁹¹⁶ The Gospel of Peter displays close proximity with several conventions of ancient rhetoric and detecting these conventional features is important for properly evaluating their meaning. In addition to the already existing anti-Jewish elements in the Christian tradition, the author of the Gospel of Peter turned to the conventional rhetoric of slander known as *vituperatio*. The conventions of polemical rhetoric deployed against the Jews in the Gospel of Peter belong to the context of ancient intergroup disputes and were probably intended for internal consumption.

The use of conventional rhetoric has important implications for the historical study. The use of conventional rhetoric does not by itself prove that some kind of was not persecution involved. The use of such polemical rhetoric should, however, lead to a serious suspicion whether we can interpret this kind of hostile rhetoric as a sign of a more serious social conflict. Schaeffer correctly notes that the Jews are described as hypocrites in the Gospel of Peter.⁹¹⁷ Such a description is not uncommon within the context of ancient polemical conventions of rhetoric. The accusation of hypocrisy was one of the most common rhetorical tools that was used to denigrate opponents. The often-quoted summary by Johnson deserves to be quoted once more:

If by definition sophists are hypocritical, and philosophers of all opposing schools are hypocritical, and philosophers in general are hypocritical, and Alexandrian pagans are hypocritical, and Apion is a hypocrite, are we really surprised to find scribes and Pharisees called hypocrites?⁹¹⁸

⁹¹⁵ Johnson 1989, 430–441. See also Setzer 1994, 131.

⁹¹⁶ Johnson 1989, 433.

⁹¹⁷ Schaeffer 1995, 244–247

⁹¹⁸ Johnson 1989, 440.

We might just as well ask are we surprised to find that Jews are described as hypocrites in the Gospel of Peter?

The identification of the rhetorical conventions helps us to understand the nature of the conflict between Christians and Jews more accurately. The close proximity of the polemic in the Gospel of Peter and the polemic conventions of ancient rhetoric can be used as further evidence of for hypothesis of the verbal polemics between the Christians and the Jews. It can also be argued that Jews presented slander against the Christians. Although there is no direct evidence in the Gospel of Peter, it is reasonable to suggest that the use of *vituperatio* was not limited to only one side of the dispute. In the context of intergroup disputes in antiquity it would have been unusual and uncharacteristic if the Jews had only presented neutral arguments against the Christian convictions without resorting to *vituperatio*. There is no indication that the Jews did not resort to these rhetorical conventions in the intra-Jewish disputes between different factions of Judaism or in disputes with outsiders. Therefore, it is probable that the Jews also were slanderous towards the Christians and applied polemical conventions in these verbal disputes between two closely related communities.

The use of polemical conventions further strengthens the need to make a distinction between the historical situation and the rhetorical situation. Denker identifies the rhetorical situation with the historical situation and Schaeffer identifies the rhetorical situation with the historical situation. In both instances the methodologically unwarranted equation between these two contexts leads into problematic conclusions. A methodological distinction between the historical and the rhetorical situation provides a solution to these problems. The criticism of the Jews belongs to the social context behind the text, but the text itself is not written for this historical situation. The polemic rhetoric against the Jews addresses the Christian community. The rhetorical situation of the Gospel of Peter is within the Christian community whose members have faced Jewish criticism of their core convictions. The hostile rhetoric in the Gospel of Peter is not a sign of a persecution by the Jews in the social reality behind the text. Instead, it is

evidence of the use of conventional rhetoric in intergroup disputes in the rhetorical situation of the Gospel of Peter. The Gospel of Peter is a reaction to the Jewish criticism against Christian claims, but it is directed at the Christian community.

The most important aspect of rhetorical criticism is to discover the author's intention. The intention of the author of the Gospel of Peter was to present a narrative that would provide a response to the exigence of the rhetorical situation. The deliberate and systematic approach in the author's composition of the Gospel of Peter is rhetorical in nature. The author attempted to refute the opponents' claims (apologetic redaction) and denigrate those who put them forward (polemical redaction). The author's main rhetorical problem was that the Jews argued that Jesus is not the Son of God. The main standpoint in the Gospel of Peter is that Jesus is the Son of God (Gos. Pet. 3:6, 3:9, 11:45, 11:46). In this regard the Gospel of Peter did not differ from the author's sources.⁹¹⁹ However, the rhetorical situation was different and therefore the author of the Gospel of Peter had to create a new rhetorical discourse to convince the audience to continue to believe in the foundation narrative of the Christian community. The rhetorical situation provides a framework for the rhetoric analysis. The intention of the author of the Gospel of Peter was to assure his audience that Jesus was the Son of God in the face of Jewish criticism against this claim. In the following the narrative of the Gospel of Peter is interpreted as an elaborate set of rhetorical arguments to support this claim.

The death of Jesus and the culpability of the Jews

The Akhmîm fragment begins in mid-scene and it is to some extent uncertain what preceded the extant material.⁹²⁰ However, the main rhetorical argument of the trial scene (Gos. Pet. 1:1–1:2) seems to be relatively clear. Throughout the extant fragment the audience is presented with several characters in the

⁹¹⁹ See Kennedy 1984, 98–100, 103; Hietanen 2011, 68, 70–71.

⁹²⁰ Would the author of the Gospel of Peter have left out the cries of the crowd or Matthew's infamous "his blood be on us and on our children" which would have served his intention. Probably not. Even if the people were not involved in the decision to crucify Jesus, they carry out the murder of the Lord.

narrative that represent opposite reactions to Jesus.⁹²¹ At the beginning of the fragment the characters are depicted making a decision about how to relate to Jesus. Pilate washes his hands, but the Jews refuse to do so. Augustin notes that the author emphasizes the intention of the Jews by repeating that they do not wish to wash their hands.⁹²² The different actions of the characters are underlined by Pilate's dramatic exit in protest. Rhetorically Pilate functions as witness to the innocence of Jesus and against the sentence passed by Herod and his judges. In the trial scene Jesus stands convicted, but the rhetoric of the author already anticipates the judgement on the Jews.

The trial scene of the Gospel of Peter is interrupted by Joseph's request for the body of the Lord. Joseph's request begins a narrative that intends to assure the audience that the Lord was honourably buried. Joseph, a friend of Pilate and the Lord, asks for the Lord's body from the Roman prefect (Gos. Pet. 2:3). Pilate's inability to prevent the crucifixion is underlined by his request for the body of the Lord from Herod (Gos. Pet. 2:4). Pilate washes his hands and leaves the trial in protest, but is unable to prevent Herod and the Jews from crucifying the Lord. Pilate considers that the Lord is innocent, but is presented as being in an inferior position to Herod and his judges. The burial narrative reaffirms the culpability of the Jewish authorities.

The author of the Gospel of Peter carefully constructs Herod's response to Pilate's request. Herod replies that even they would have buried the Lord, because the Scriptures demand that a murdered man must be buried before sunset (Gos. Pet. 2:5). Herod's response explains why the Jews, who are consistently described negatively in the Gospel of Peter, allow a friend of the Lord to honourably wash the body, wrap it in linen and bury it in his own garden tomb (Gos. Pet. 6:23–6:24). More importantly, Herod's response further emphasizes the sins of the Jews. The author of the Gospel of Peter introduced the tradition of burying a murdered man before sunset into the passion narrative. However, the Scriptures refer to a lawful execution. The author of the Gospel of Peter describes the Lord as a victim of a murder. This deliberate change indicates that the following description of the passion of

⁹²¹ Nicklas 2000, 212 and Augustin 2014, 151 emphasize that the characters of the narrative are depicted by representing them in contrary roles and actions.

⁹²² Augustin 2014, 157.

Jesus is a murder in which the Jewish authorities have been the judge and the Jewish people have carried out the judgement.

The trial scene ends with Herod handing the Lord over to the Jewish people (Gos. Pet. 2:5). In the Gospel of Peter the Jews are described as murdering the Son of God, but at the same time they are concerned with burying him in accordance with the law. The author depicts them as occupied with more trivial religious matters rather than focusing on the truly important issue at hand. A famous biblical example of this rhetorical topos is Jesus's words to the Pharisees: "You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel" (Matt. 23:24). In the Gospel of Peter the Jews strain out a gnat by worrying about lawful burial of the crucified, but swallow a camel by killing the Son of God.

In the passion narrative the most important rhetorical change of the author of the Gospel of Peter is the description of the Jews. They are cast as the sole culprits for Jesus's death. The negative description of the Jews extends throughout the entire fragment of the Gospel of Peter. The intention of the author of the Gospel of Peter is to distance the Christian community from the Jews and undermine their credibility by presenting them as the murderers of the Lord. The Jews, who the author of the Gospel of Peter perceived as a threat to the Christian community, are depicted in the worst possible light to achieve this goal. The Jewish people mock and abuse the Son of God (Gos. Pet. 3:6–9) before crucifying him (Gos. Pet. 4:10) and offering him a poisonous drink (Gos. Pet. 5:16). The Jews are the opponents of the Lord and the author describes them as the opponents of those who believe in him (Gos. Pet. 4:13–4:14, 7:26–7:27, 12:50–12:54).

The passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter contains various allusions to the passion prophecies. The author of the Gospel of Peter alludes to the Scriptures in suggesting that Jesus's death fulfilled the prophecies. This is, however, not essentially different from the rhetoric of the canonical gospels, which all emphasize the fulfilment of the passion prophecies. In the Gospel of Peter the Jews spit on the Lord, strike him and scourge him (Gos. Pet. 3:9). They crucify him between criminals (Gos. Pet. 4:10), cast lots for his cloths (Gos. Pet. 4:12) and offer him a drink of gall and vinegar (Gos. Pet. 5:16). There is a cumulative effect in the treatment of the passion prophecies,

but the allusions to Scriptures are primarily drawn from the canonical gospels. In this regard the Gospel of Peter did not challenge the existing gospels. The author of the Gospel of Peter combined various passion prophecies and in this manner enhanced the argument that the Scriptures foretold the passion of Jesus.

The Jews also mock the Lord before crucifying him. They dress him in purple, place a crown of thorns on his head, set him on a judgement seat and ask for a righteous judgement from the king of Israel (Gos. Pet. 3:7–3:8). They write king of Israel on the cross (Gos. Pet. 4:11) and claim authority over the Son of God (Gos. Pet. 3:6) as they honour him with these kinds of mock honours (Gos. Pet. 3:9). There is a sense of irony in the mocking of Jesus in the Gospel of Peter. The Jews mock Jesus, but they do not realize that in reality he is the Son of God and the king of Israel.⁹²³ They ask a righteous judgement from the Lord, but their own actions constitute an unjust murder of the Lord.

In the middle of the passion narrative the penitent thief makes a striking confession of faith in Jesus. In Luke the penitent thief proclaims Jesus's innocence. In the Gospel of Peter this aspect is retained, but the author of the Gospel of Peter has emphasized the confession of Jesus as the saviour of men (Gos. Pet. 4:13). As far as we can tell, the penitent is not introduced earlier in the narrative and he has no prior relationship with Jesus. nevertheless, he responds immediately to Jesus in a way that is reminiscent of the disciples' response to Jesus's call (Mark 1:16–20). The thief's response gives Jesus recognition as an extraordinary person.⁹²⁴ His confession confirms Jesus as the saviour of men at the extreme moment of doubt on the cross. The different levels of the story intersect. The penitent thief's faith encourages the audience to believe as well.⁹²⁵ The author again uses opposition to create a negative image of the Jews. The penitent thief explicates Jesus's innocence and the guilt of his Jewish crucifiers.⁹²⁶ The penitent thief exemplifies the proper response to Jesus in contrast to the Jews who have crucified him. The author of the Gospel of Peter further enhances the contrast

⁹²³ See also Augustin 2014, 173.

⁹²⁴ See Kennedy 1984, 103.

⁹²⁵ See Hietanen 2011, 73–74.

⁹²⁶ Nicklas 2001, 235; Augustin 2014, 188.

between the Jews and the penitent thief by narrating how they become enraged and decided not to break his legs so that he might die in agony (Gos. Pet. 4:14). The ambiguous phrase leaves open whether the Jews wanted Jesus or the penitent thief to suffer. Regardless of one's interpretation of the ambiguity, which might have been intentional, the author of the Gospel of Peter describes the Jews as opponents who wish to inflict suffering on the Lord or those who confess him.

The author of the Gospel of Peter did not only apply the passion prophecies to the suffering and death of Jesus. As surprising as it may seem, the author's comment in the middle of the passion narrative does not emphasize that Jesus's passion fulfilled the prophecies, but that the Jews fulfilled everything (Gos. Pet. 5:17). The author of the Gospel of Peter did not exclude the tradition that the prophecies foretold the suffering of Jesus. This was a well established part of the Christian tradition and was probably familiar to the audience. However, the author emphasized that the Jews fulfilled the prophecies of the sins against the Lord. The prophecies did not refer only to the suffering of Jesus, but also to the sins of the Jews.

The author of the Gospel of Peter used divine signs of the passion narrative to support his standpoint. In the canonical gospels the darkness at noon, the rending of the temple veil and the earthquake are signs that indicate that Jesus is the Son of God. In the Gospel of Peter they serve the same function. However, the author of the Gospel of Peter has used the darkness at noon, the rending of the temple veil and the earthquake as signs of judgement against the Jews. The author uses these signs to demonstrate that the Jews have fallen under God's judgement. The Jews respond to the signs with fear, but do not understand the significance of the signs. They are concerned only about fulfilling the law (Gos. Pet. 5:15) and rejoice when they believe they have succeeded (Gos. Pet. 6:22–23) without knowing that they have filled the measure of their sins (Gos. Pet. 5:17). The author of the Gospel of Peter implies that the Jews do not know or understand their own Scriptures.

When the Jews finally realize and lament their sins, it is too late. The approaching judgement will bring the end of Jerusalem (Gos. Pet. 7:25). Although it is not explicitly mentioned in the Gospel of Peter, the author

intended to convey, and his audience probably understood that the destruction of Jerusalem was a judgement for the murder of the Son of God. The author of the Gospel of Peter places the confession of guilt in the lamentation of the Jews. They confess their sins against the Lord. The Jews lament their sins, but the author of the Gospel of Peter has carefully phrased their confession. The Jewish people and their leaders mourn the destruction of Jerusalem that they had brought upon themselves, but not the sins they have committed against the Son of God. The Jews are depicted as selfish and do not demonstrate genuine repentance. They continue unrepentant hostility against the disciples (Gos. Pet. 7:26) and the women (Gos. Pet. 12:50).

In contrast to the Jews the disciples show proper lamentation and mourning for the death of the Lord. The lamentation and mourning of the disciples serves the apology of the author. The critics had pointed out that Jesus had chosen unworthy followers and their testimony was not reliable. The apology for the disciples is elaborate, but not particularly effective. The disciples are hiding and do not follow their Lord to the end.⁹²⁷ The flight of the disciples was too well established in the tradition to be suppressed or bypassed. The tradition created a constraint that prevented the author of the Gospel of Peter from describing a proper Christian following of Jesus, namely the carrying of the cross.

The mourning of the disciples does not solve the problems of the tradition, but it creates a contrast between the disciples and the Jews. The genuine repentance of the disciples and the selfish lamentation of the Jews place the disciples in a more favourable light and cast the Jews in a more negative light. The disciples are concerned for the Lord, but the Jews are concerned for themselves.⁹²⁸ The disciples' behaviour might not have been exemplary, but it compares favourably in comparison with the behaviour of the Jews. The audience is asked to side with the disciples and against the Jews. In the rhetorical situation of the Gospel of Peter, this description formed the best possible response to the Jewish criticism against the disciples.

⁹²⁷ It has to be remembered that we do not know how these circumstances were formed in the Gospel of Peter. The trajectory of the tradition indicates that in the Gospel of Peter the disciples' actions in Gethsemane were justified.

⁹²⁸ See also Augustin 2014, 214–215.

The resurrection of Jesus and the witnesses of the resurrection

In the passion narrative the Jewish people are the main culprits, while the leaders are only briefly mentioned in the beginning and at the end of the narrative. In the resurrection narrative the roles have changed. This change reflects the author's use of sources. The traditions of the sources constrains the author in depicting the Jewish people and leaders, but the intention to denigrate both remains the same. The polemical rhetoric of the Gospel of Peter is apparent in the description of the Jewish leaders. In the author's sources the high priests are the main Jewish opponents of Jesus. In the Gospel of Peter elders, scribes and Pharisees have replaced them completely. This seems unmotivated unless the description of their participation in the crucial past event was an attempt to affect the audience's attitude towards the contemporary representatives of the groups. The Gospel of Peter can be seen as a rhetorical treatise that attempts to create an image of the crucial event in the past and the Jewish groups' involvement in that event. The image is created for the audience to reaffirm their belief in the resurrection and cast a negative judgement on the opponents involved in it, and by analogy their contemporary representatives.

The author of the Gospel of Peter describes the Jewish leaders as cowards who are only interested in their own wellbeing (Gos. Pet. 8:29–30).⁹²⁹ This characterization will continue throughout the resurrection narrative and becomes more acute at the end of the narrative. The opponents in the dispute are described negatively to undermine their credibility. The primary purpose of the first part of the resurrection narrative is to demonstrate that the disciples could not have stolen the body. The tomb is closed, sealed and guarded by the Roman soldiers and the Jewish elders. It was impossible for the disciples to steal the body. The tomb is as secure as it possibly can be, but the efforts of the Jewish leaders are ineffective against the Son of God.

Another argument against the resurrection was that Jesus did not demonstrate his status as the Son of God. The Jewish critics referred to in

⁹²⁹ Augustin 2014, 220.

Celsus raised the question why Jesus did not appear to his enemies. The author of the Gospel of Peter provided a narrative that answers this criticism. The author combined the escorted resurrection tradition and the guard at the tomb narrative. He also inserted the Jewish leaders into the guard at the tomb narrative. The outcome was that Jesus's resurrection is witnessed by the Jewish leaders and by Roman soldiers.

In the extant fragment of the Gospel of Peter the main standpoint of the author is most clearly presented by the Roman soldiers, who make the climactic confession that Jesus is the Son of God (Gos. Pet. 11:45). The Roman soldiers believed that Jesus is the Son of God and the audience should hold fast to this belief as well. Pilate functions as a witness to the innocence of Jesus and the guilt of the Jewish leaders. He also confesses Jesus as the Son of God and reprimands the Jewish leaders for bringing about the Jesus's death. The Jewish leaders condemned Jesus to death and the Jewish people carried out this decision.

The response of the Jewish leaders forms a striking contrast to the Roman confession. Rather than acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God, they attempt to suppress knowledge of the resurrection for the benefit of their banal lives (Gos. Pet. 11:47). They confess that they would rather commit the greatest sin before God than fall into the hands of the Jewish people (Gos. Pet. 11:48). The Romans provide a proper response to the resurrection of Jesus and the Jewish leaders provide the improper response.

The author of the Gospel of Peter characterized the Jewish leaders as occupied with a mundane question. Although they have just witnessed the resurrection at first hand, they still fear the Jewish people more than God. The Jewish leaders are not concerned with the will of God but their own wellbeing. They have witnessed the resurrection of the Lord, but they still act according to their selfish motives. It is implied that nothing could convince the Jewish leaders to confess Jesus as the Son of God. The Jewish elders and scribes will not under any circumstances confess the truth of the resurrection and therefore in the social reality their criticism against the resurrection slanders those who are not themselves reliable witnesses. The intention of the author of the Gospel of Peter was to refute the criticism of his Jewish opponent. The

negative description of the Jewish leaders served the purpose of discrediting their reliability. The description of the leaders' motives is an example of conventional rhetoric in the Gospel of Peter. The Jewish leaders confess that they fear the people more than God (Gos. Pet. 11:48). The revelation of the opponents' true motives was a conventional *topos* in ancient polemical rhetoric.⁹³⁰ Moreover, the audience receives the motives of the Jewish leaders themselves, which further enhances the reliability of the accusation.⁹³¹ The description of Jewish leaders as motivated by fear rather than devotion to God is a textbook example of diminishing the credibility of the other party involved. It also served the purpose of discrediting the reliability of the contemporary Jewish leaders who had criticized Christian traditions.

The author used a similar rhetorical technique at the end of the passion and resurrection narratives. The Jewish leaders confess that they are "guilty of the greatest sin before God" (Gos. Pet. 11:48). In a similar manner Herod confesses the murder of the Lord (Gos. Pet. 2:5) and the Jewish people, elders and priest lament over the sin they have committed and the following destruction of Jerusalem (Gos. Pet. 7:25). The author does not state the accusation. Instead, the Jewish leaders themselves confess their ultimate sin. This rhetorical technique creates a seemingly direct testimony of the Jewish leaders. In a narrative context "example and testimony is often more effective than plain assertion".⁹³² The author does not describe any kind of repentance by the leaders. Their own confession is rhetorically a more effective way to summarize their sins. The use of this rhetorical technique at the end of the resurrection narrative indicates that a similar passage at the end of the passion narrative should be interpreted in the light of this technique. Therefore, these verses are rhetorically effective ways to denigrate the Jewish people and leaders.

In the author's sources women are the first to discover the empty tomb and receive a message of Jesus's resurrection from the angel. In Matthew and John they are the first to see the risen Lord. This tradition drew criticism from outsiders that the belief in Jesus's resurrection was based only

⁹³⁰ Thurén 2005, 275–276.

⁹³¹ Augustin 2014, 256–257.

⁹³² Hietanen 2011, 78.

on the experience of some unreliable women. The role of women as witnesses to the resurrection and the criticism against this tradition constrained the author in the rhetorical situation. The author skilfully constructed his narrative to include the women as witnesses to the empty tomb and the angel's testimony to the resurrection, but at the same time, he responded to criticism by excluding the women from delivering any message to the disciples.

In the Gospel of Peter the women find the tomb empty and the angel tells them that Jesus has risen. They do not, however, receive a commandment to report this message and their experience to the disciples. The author continues to emphasize the disciples' devotion to Jesus (Gos. Pet. 14:58–14:60). The emphasis can be seen as an attempt to draw attention away from their fear or any other shortcomings of their behaviour. The rhetoric of the narrative supports the reliability of disciples within the constraints set by the tradition. The disciples are unaware of the women's discovery of the empty tomb when they leave Jerusalem and go fishing in the lake. The fragment breaks off at this point, but it is very likely that the narrative continued with the appearance of the risen Lord. The disciples have not received any word from the women and their belief in the resurrection of Jesus is based solely on their own encounter with the resurrected Lord.⁹³³ Moreover, the resurrection has been witnessed by the Roman soldiers and the Jewish leaders. The rhetorical argument to support the belief in the resurrection of Jesus is constructed by including the narrative of the women's discovery of the empty tomb and the testimony of the angel, but the disciples form their belief in the resurrection directly on their own experience. The intention of the author was to enhance the belief in the resurrection of Jesus by responding to the claims that threatened it.

⁹³³ The fragment of the Gospel of Peter breaks off and we probably will never know if the women eventually told their experience to the disciples. The women could have told their experience and the angel's message *after* the disciples had seen the risen Lord.

6.4. The social identity approach to the Gospel of Peter

The social identity approach examines the relationship between social behaviour and the social situation that involves intergroup interaction. I argued above that the social identity approach is not directly applicable to the text of the Gospel of Peter. The social identity approach provides a theory to explain the interaction between the author's social behaviour and the social situation behind the Gospel of Peter. The historical critical analysis of the evidence has provided a reconstruction of the interaction between Jews and Christians in the social situation and the content of the author's attempts to construct social reality. The socio-historical factors have an essential influence on the intergroup behaviour between Christians and Jews, and they need to be taken into consideration when analysing their interaction. The psychological processes provide the parameters for the understanding of the socio-historical factors, but they alone cannot explain why the author of the Gospel of Peter demonized the Jews. Therefore, I will provide a very brief summary of the author's social behaviour and the social situation of the Gospel of Peter. I have discussed the author's composition of his gospel and the social situation of that composition at length above. In the following I will summarize only the most relevant aspects of that discussion here before I examine the negative stereotype of the Jews in the light of the social identity approach.

The author of the Gospel of Peter created a thoroughly anti-Jewish passion and resurrection narrative. The Jewish people and leaders were depicted negatively at every turn, and his sources attested to a different narrative of the crucial events of the Christian belief. The author of the Gospel of Peter consistently rewrote the foundation narrative of Christianity in order to depict the Jews as the murderers of the Lord. I have argued that behind the Gospel of Peter lie heated verbal polemics between Christians and Jews. The Gospel of Peter was written as a response to a social situation where some Jews had presented criticism against the foundational narrative of Christianity. The Jewish criticism against the foundation narrative of Christianity explains the apologetic redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter. The author of the Gospel of Peter attempted to refute the Jewish

accusations. The hostile description of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter is related to this intergroup dispute between Christians and Jews.

It is important to emphasize that the following social psychological explanation of the social behaviour of the author of the Gospel of Peter is directed towards explaining this reconstructed social behaviour in the reconstructed social situation. The author's use of sources has been evaluated very differently in the scholarship of the Gospel of Peter. Verheyden, for example, claims that the author of the Gospel of Peter "often seemingly indiscriminately makes use of several of these sources at a time"⁹³⁴ and "that is how Christians like himself commonly saw it: Jesus was killed by the Jews".⁹³⁵ If Verheyden's analysis of the composition of the Gospel of Peter is correct, the foundation of the following analysis of the development of Christian anti-Judaism in the light of the social identity approach would have to be re-evaluated.

The social interaction between Christians and Jews provides vital evidence for explaining the author's composition of his gospel. The verbal polemics between Christians and Jews also explain, to a certain extent, the author's anti-Jewish narrative. They create a common sense notion that the religious disputes between members of the Christian and Jewish communities led the author of the Gospel of Peter to demonize his Jewish opponents. However, the author's attempts to construct social reality cannot be explained by the social experiences and social historical factors alone. The author of the Gospel of Peter interpreted the social interaction between Christians and Jews as a member of the Christian community. His internalized membership in the Christian community influenced his sense of identity and provided him with a motivation to create a positive distinction for his own community. This in turn influenced his response to the social situation. The author's response to the social situation poses several questions. Why did he create a stereotype of the Jews as the murderers of the Lord in response to a polemical social interaction with some Jews in another time and place? There is no direct connection between the criticism against the passion and resurrection of Jesus by some contemporary Jews and the denigration of all Jews, past and present, as

⁹³⁴ Verheyden 2007, 288.

⁹³⁵ Verheyden 2007, 293.

murderers of Jesus. Although it might seem logical that the disputes over the passion and resurrection of Jesus with contemporary Jews led Christians to blame the Jews for Jesus's death, in reality this defies logic. Moreover, even if the culpability for the death of Jesus is assigned to the Jews, as is done in the Gospel of Peter, this culpability is not transferrable to the contemporary Jewish critics. There is a disconnect between the polemical social experiences and the anti-Jewish stereotype of the Gospel of Peter. Furthermore, I have argued that there is no direct connection between the social situation of second-century Christians and the increasing anti-Judaism of the passion narrative. If social experiences alone had dictated the discrimination between groups, then imprisonment, trial, torture and martyrdom of second-century Christians at the hands of the Romans would have been transferred to the passion narrative as the increased culpability of Pilate and the Roman soldiers. The Gospel of Peter, along with many other sources, witnesses an opposite development. Therefore, it is problematic to establish a straightforward causal relationship between the social experiences of Christians and the interpretations of their traditions. In the following I will argue that there was a social psychological component involved in the construction of the anti-Jewish passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter. The social identity approach provides an empirically tested social psychological theory to explain the discrimination against the Jews by the author of the Gospel of Peter. The theoretical framework for the analysis also makes explicit the underlying presuppositions of the author's behaviour. Moreover, it offers new insights into the study of the relationship between Christians and Jews in the second century.

The intergroup disputes between Christians and Jews presuppose that individuals categorized themselves as members of their respective groups. The self-categorization occurs in a hierarchical system of classification. A lower level abstraction that distinguishes two groups requires a categorization of these groups as similar at a higher level of abstraction. The salience of each self-categorization is dependent upon the social situation that determines the comparisons. The self-categorization of the author of the Gospel of Peter became salient in the second century context. In the second-

century context, Jews were both socially and ideologically the closest out-group to Christians.⁹³⁶ Both communities derived their identity from the same writings and their claims to these traditions to legitimate their community were mutually exclusive. The Jews and Christians were similar on a higher level of abstraction, but on a lower level of abstraction the Christians identified themselves in distinction to their Jewish neighbours. This meant that the struggle for positive distinctiveness was carried out between these groups. While Christians pursued this more actively, the repeated Jewish arguments against Christian claims, reflected mainly in Christian sources, demonstrate that they were not irrelevant, at least to some Jews.

These insights lead to the question why Christians categorized themselves as members of one community in contrast to the Jewish community. The basic psychological process that enables group formation is depersonalization. Individuals depersonalize themselves on a relevant dimension that defines the in-group. The relevant dimension that defined the Christian community in contrast to the Jewish community was their belief in Jesus as the Lord. The death and resurrection of Jesus were at the heart of the Christian identity from the beginning of the community (1 Cor. 15:3–8). God had vindicated Jesus and his message by resurrecting him from the dead. The tradition was encapsulated in a narrative form in the four (eventually canonical) gospels that had begun to receive a recognized position towards the middle of the second century and the belief in Jesus's death and resurrection was increasingly beginning to be understood in the form of the gospel narratives. The passion and resurrection narratives formed the foundation of early Christianity. They formed the cornerstone of Christian identity and legitimated the identity of the Christian community in contrast to the Jewish community.⁹³⁷ The author's response to the conflict of verbal polemics

⁹³⁶ This argument does not mean that there was not significant diversity in second-century Christianity or Judaism. The repeated and intense disputes between members of the same faith are reflected in several sources of this period. They undisputedly demonstrate the diversity of both religions. These conflicts between different groups, however, belong at another level of abstraction. The different Christian or Jewish groups belonged in one context to the same group on a higher level of abstraction and in another context to different groups on a lower level of abstraction. These considerations have an implication to the question whether we should speak of Christianity and Judaism or Christianities and Judaisms. The social identity approach does not provide a direct answer to the debate. It only provides analytical tools to examine the similarity and differences of various factions.

⁹³⁷ One could argue that the death and resurrection of Jesus became such an important part of Christian theology, because they above all else defined Christian identity in contrast to Judaism.

between Christians and Jews must be understood against this background. The criticism of the Jews threatened the legitimacy of the Christian identity. The verbal polemics of the Jews can be seen to function as a catalyst in the process of identity formation and as directing their negative characterization, while the Jewish criticism of the central convictions of Christians challenged a belief in Jesus.

In the particular social situation where the Gospel of Peter was written, members of the Christian and Jewish communities were engaged in polemical debates over the relevant dimension that defined them as separate religious groups. This interaction between the religious groups made the author's Christian identity salient in the social situation. The salient social identity of the author affected his interpretation of the social situation. This behaviour can be examined with the insights of social identity theory. The author of the Gospel of Peter had internalized his social identity as a member of the Christian community. His social identity influenced how he interpreted the social interaction between Christians and Jews. The author's social identity had direct consequences for his response to the social situation. The minimal group experiments demonstrated that belonging to a group without any visible significance attached to the group resulted in intergroup discrimination. It is reasonable to presume that the author of the Gospel of Peter had a significant attachment to his Christian community and he responded by exhibiting more extreme intergroup discrimination. The group membership of the author provided him with a motivation to establish a positive and distinctive social identity. The comparison with the Jewish outgroup led him to strive for positive distinctiveness for the Christian community. The author of the Gospel of Peter participated in self-enhancement by assigning positive characteristic to the Christians and negative characteristics to the Jews. Categorization and self-enhancement were the necessary psychological processes in the formation of the Jewish and Christian groups and the characteristics that the author of the Gospel of Peter assigned to them. Categorization and social comparison are present in the author's intergroup discrimination. The author of the Gospel of Peter categorized all Jews as members of the same group. This classification

enabled the formation of a negative stereotype that past and present Jews shared. The particular characteristics that the author of the Gospel of Peter ascribed to the Jews, were largely derived from the social situation. Knowledge of the interaction between Christians and Jews in the above-described social situation is vital for understanding the content of the negative stereotype of the Jews that the author of the Gospel of Peter promoted in his gospel. The accusation that the Jews murdered the Lord had been formulated earlier and was known to the author of the Gospel of Peter.

However, the author of the Gospel of Peter did not simply follow established tradition for he rewrote the passion narratives of the canonical gospels. The canonical gospels contained extensive descriptions of the death of Jesus and they attributed significant responsibility to Pilate and the Roman soldiers. The author of the Gospel of Peter provided, probably for the first time, a detailed description of the culpability of the Jews for the death of Jesus.

The author's response to the social situation was to describe the Jews as the sole culprits to Jesus's death. The categorization expanded the negative experience with some Jews into a trait that characterized the whole community and all members of that community are labelled with the same negative characteristics. All member of the Jewish community are murderers of the Son of God. The complex social situation was reduced to a simple and extreme judgement between the two groups. The Christians are the followers of Jesus and the Jews are his murderers. The author of the Gospel of Peter strove for a positive distinctiveness for the Christian community in comparison to the Jewish community. With this description he created a maximum positive distinctiveness for the members of the Christian community in relation to the members of the Jewish community. The author of the Gospel of Peter claimed an ultimate positive value for the in-group and an ultimate negative value for the closest out-group. Therefore, the Christians were presented as Jesus's disciples and the Jews as his murderers. In this way, the closely related social out-group becomes the very antithesis of the in-group. This antithesis functions as a device that clearly separates the communities and gives them a distinctive social identity.

6.5. Conclusion

The intention and rhetorical strategy of the author had been anticipated in the historical critical study of the Gospel of Peter. The main rhetorical problem of the author of the Gospel of Peter was the Jewish criticism against the main standpoint of Jesus as the Son of God, and his death and resurrection as the supporting arguments for this claim. The rhetoric of the gospel was examined against the background of the conflict with the Jews. In the rhetoric critical study of the Gospel of Peter the changes to the canonical gospels were explained as the author's purpose to carefully compose the presentation of the passion and resurrection narratives to support belief in Jesus as the Son of God and refute to the Jewish objections to them. The presentation of the arguments consistently supports the author's standpoint throughout the narrative. The author's revision of the passion and resurrection narratives attempts to present a compelling rhetoric, and this has the purpose of reaffirming the community's faith in Jesus as the Son of God in the face of Jewish criticism.

The intention of the author of the Gospel of Peter was to convince his audience that Jesus is the Son of God. The rhetorical arguments promote the author's position and refute the opponents' claims. The audience is asked to make a judgement about the events and the characters involved. However, detailed as they may be, the author's arguments clarify, but do not noticeably change the description of the passion of Jesus from the four gospels. The author focuses more extensively on the *ethos* of both parties in the dispute. In this regard the Gospel of Peter differs significantly from his canonical sources. The author defends the reliability of the disciples while at the same time denigrates the Jewish people and their leaders who oppose them. In the Gospel of Peter the Jewish people and leaders are called hypocrite, coward, uncompassionate, legalistic, and fools in accordance with the best – or the worst – traditions of ancient polemical conventions, and the rhetorical critical analysis enables us to see how the author uses rhetorical devices to support his position.

The discrimination against the Jews was founded on the cognitive processes of the human mind. It was built on categorization and self-enhancement, which are the two fundamental cognitive processes in the formation of social identity. The Christian identity was constructed in contrast to others and the Jews formed the closest out-group of Christians in the second century. The categorization produced an accentuated perception that all Jews were similar in the relevant dimension that defined the relationship between the religious communities, in the approach to the death and resurrection of Jesus. Categorization produced a stereotypical perception where all members of the Jewish community were perceived as sharing the same characteristics. This cognitive process explains why all members of the Jewish community shared the characteristic of being the murderers of the Lord. The characteristic attributed to the Jews enabled Christians to evaluate positively the stereotypic characteristics of the Christian community and to establish a relatively positive social identity in comparison to the Jewish community. This comparison created a positive distinctiveness that enhanced the self-esteem of the members of the community. The cognitive and motivational aspects of the mind governed the social construction of the Christian and Jewish communities. Categorization and self-enhancement were the necessary building blocks in the formation of the anti-Jewish passion narrative of the Gospel of Peter. They explain why it was possible to create – and sustain – a social construction of all Jews, past and present, as the murderers of the Lord.

The Gospel of Peter describes the Jews as the murderers of Jesus. By depicting the Jews as such, the Christian community – the followers of Jesus – receive a maximum positive distinctiveness in relation to the closely related Jewish community. In the social reality of the day, the members of the author's Christian community were much more likely to suffer severe forms of persecution at the hands of Roman officials and soldiers. Yet, in the text and through the text the author consistently attacks the Jews. Pilate and the Roman soldiers are described as neutral or even as somewhat positive characters. The social identity approach explains why, contrary to historical reality, the Jews were regarded as more threatening than the Romans. I

suggest that the need to secure positive social identity during heated verbal disputes with some Jews was a prominent factor in the formation of Christian anti-Jewish traditions. The social identity approach explains why past, present and future Jews were all regarded as responsible for the death of the Lord.

7. Conclusion

Jesus of Nazareth was crucified by a group of Roman soldiers under the orders of Pilate and in co-operation with members of the high-priestly aristocracy of Jerusalem. However, in the history of Christianity the Jewish people have been blamed for Jesus's death with very tragic consequences. In this study I have examined the historical and social reason that led to the formation of an image of the Jews as the murderers of Jesus in the light of the evidence preserved in the Gospel of Peter. The Gospel of Peter is the earliest narrative that explicitly describes the Jewish people murdering Jesus. A particular focus in my study was to present an approach that combines a detailed analysis of an ancient gospel text and the dynamics of the second-century social context with the cognitive and emotional processes involved in the formation of intergroup discrimination and insights of the rhetorical criticism. I argued that historical critical questions guide how the Gospel of Peter is used in the study of the formation of Christian anti-Judaism.

The text of the Gospel of Peter was analysed through source and redaction criticism. I examined the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels and concluded that the literary dependence of the former on the latter is the most plausible explanation for the existing evidence. The cumulative evidence of unique features of the canonical gospels, verbal agreements, inconsistencies in the narrative and the redaction of the author of the Gospel of Peter explain the similarities and the differences between the Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels.

I argued that the results of the historical critical analysis provided vital information for the reconstruction of the historical situation in which the text was composed. The author of the Gospel of Peter knew the canonical gospels. This is demonstrated by the author's profound apologetic and polemical redaction of his sources. I compared the author's apologetic redaction to criticism presented against Christian claims and argued that the redaction addresses the criticism to such an extent that it can hardly be seen as a coincidence. Criticism is consistently attributed to the Jewish critics of Christianity, and Jewish criticism is represented as being very different from

non-Jewish slander against Christianity. The polemic against the Jews in the Gospel of Peter is explained as part of the verbal polemics between members of two closely related communities. I criticized previous studies on the social context of the Gospel of Peter as the evidence did not support the thesis that the Gospel of Peter was written for Jews or was a response to Jewish persecution of Christians. I argued that a distinction between the historical and the rhetorical situation helps us to reconstruct both more accurately. The criticism of Jewish opponents influenced the composition of the Gospel of Peter, but the text was not directed towards these opponents. The primary audience of the gospel was the Christian community and the author's rhetoric was interpreted from this perspective. I also criticized the claims that the author of the Gospel of Peter wrote to refute Gentile criticism of Christianity and in order to present a favourable narrative to the Romans. My main conclusion is that the Gospel of Peter presents a deliberate and consistent anti-Jewish passion and resurrection narrative.

The insights of the original social context of the Gospel of Peter enabled the examination of the author's relationship to Jews and Judaism more profoundly. The social identity approach was applied to analyse the identity construction of Christians in the face of the above-mentioned challenges. The social identity approach explains the intergroup interaction and particularly the intergroup discrimination between Christians and Jews. This approach explains why Christians constructed a self-conception of their own group as loyal followers of Jesus in relation to the Jewish group, who are represented as demonic murderers of Jesus. This polarized Christian identity is seen as a norm that governed the community's orientation in a complex social reality where divisions between the respective groups were not clearly defined.

The influence of social identity and rhetoric can be seen in the Gospel of Peter. In the social reality the members of the author's community were more likely to suffer persecution at the hands of Roman officials and soldiers. Yet the author consistently attacks the Jews. Pilate and the Roman soldiers are described as neutral or even somewhat positive characters. Therefore, the polemical description of the Jews in the Gospel of Peter should

not be connected to persecution. I suggested that the need to secure positive social identity during heated verbal disputes with some Jews was a more prominent factor in the formation of the anti-Jewish Christian theology of the second century than violent persecution.

Although this study has focused on the Gospel of Peter, my research indicates that a similar process can explain the anti-Judaism that has been preserved in various other early Christian sources. First, the cognitive and motivational aspects of the formation of negative out-group stereotypes are considered to be universal. Second, the social identity of Christians was defined by emphasizing the central convictions (the death and resurrection of Jesus) which separated them from their Jewish neighbours, who shared most of the building blocks of the Christian social identity (the religious traditions of Israel). Third, the themes that are addressed in the Gospel of Peter are also present in other sources that discuss the relationship between Christians and Jews. Therefore, the study of the Gospel of Peter provides insights that can be applied to explain the development of Christian anti-Judaism on a wider scale.

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